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Riches To Rags

How Billionaire Ranbaxy Brothers Malvinder And Shivinder Singh Landed In Jail



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Man Arrested for Raping NRI Woman on Pretext of Marriage in South Mumbai

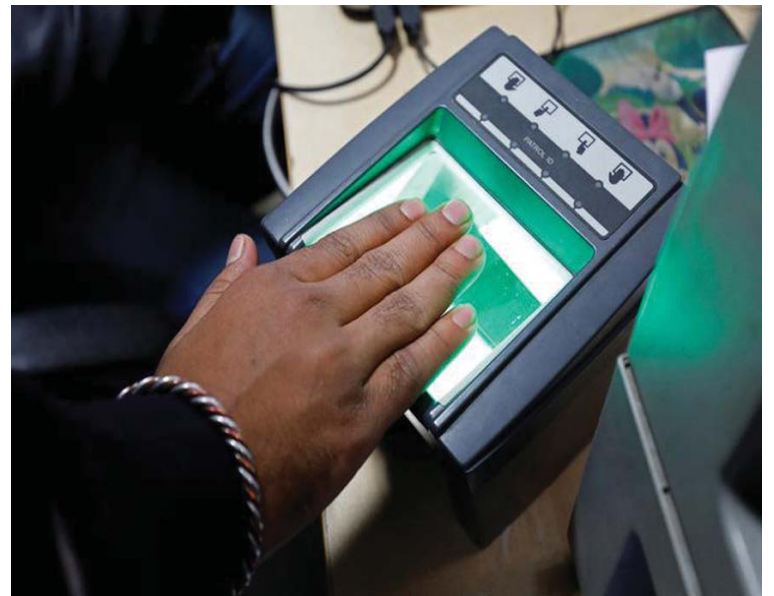
(News Agencies) Mumbai: A man has been arrested here for allegedly raping a 38-year-old Non-Resident Indian (NRI) woman after promising to marry her, the police said on Tuesday. The victim lodged a complaint against the accused at Gamdevi police station in South Mumbai on September 21. The woman, a divorcee and mother of two, has been living in London for the last 17 years. According to the complaint, the incident took place during her visit here between July 10 to 27. The victim knew the accused, Junaid Ansari, since 2015. Ansari, who runs a medical store, and the two got to know each other when he provided her medicines without prescription on one occasion. The two started chatting on social media. During a recent Mumbai visit, they met and went on dates, the police official said. On July 21, they drove to Girgaum Chowpatty in Ansari's car. After promising to marry her, he raped her inside the car, the woman claimed. After a few days she returned to London. They kept in touch. Ansari had promised her that he will marry her on November 12, but on September 17 he told her that marriage was not possible as his family was opposed to it. The victim immediately flew back to Mumbai and met him, and he again tried to sexually assault her, she alleged. The next day, Ansari allegedly told the victim that he will not marry her and will not meet her again. Feeling cheated, the woman approached the police who arrested Ansari under section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code two days ago and further probe was on, the official said.

NRIs Can Now Apply for Aadhaar on Arrival Without 182-day Wait

UIDAI circular said valid Indian passport will be accepted as proof of identity, proof of address (PoA) and date of birth document.

(News Agencies) New Delhi: Non-resident Indians (NRIs) with valid Indian passport can apply for Aadhaar on arrival, without the 182-day waiting period, with the government issuing a notification in this regard. Following the notification, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has also come out with a circular stating that "NRI after his arrival in India, shall be entitled to obtain Aadhaar number". The modalities for application remain more or less unchanged, a UIDAI source said adding that NRIs with Indian passport can now apply for biometric ID on arrival or by scheduling a prior appointment, thus doing away with the requirement for a mandatory 182-day waiting period. UIDAI circular said valid Indian passport will be accepted as proof of identity, proof of address (PoA) and date of birth document.

"In case NRI's passport does not have Indian address, he shall be allowed to submit any of the other UIDAI-approved PoA documents as proof of address," said the circular issued on Monday. It may be recalled that in her Budget speech on July 5, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said, "I propose to consider issuing Aadhaar card for non-resident Indians with Indian passports after their arrival in India," without the stipulated waiting period.



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NRI Marriage Registration Bill Referred to Parliament's Standing Committee on External Affairs

The 'Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019' empowers passport authorities to impound or revoke passport or travel documents of NRIs who fail to register their marriage within 30 days after getting married.

(News Agencies) New Delhi: The bill, which makes it mandatory for NRI men to register their marriage within 30 days of getting married, has been referred to Parliament's standing committee on

external affairs. The 'Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019' empowers passport authorities to impound or revoke passport or travel documents of NRIs who fail to register their

marriage within 30 days after getting married. Members are informed that the Speaker, Lok Sabha, in consultation with the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, has referred the Registration of Marriage of

Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019, as introduced in the Rajya Sabha, to the Standing Committee on External Affairs for examination and report within two months," the Lok Sabha secretariat said in a bulletin. Against the



backdrop of cases of Indian women being trapped in fraudulent marriages with non-resident Indians, a bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in February this year to make it compulsory to register such marriages within 30 days. If an NRI man fails to register his marriage within the stipulated time, his passport can be impounded or revoked.

Also, it allows courts to attach properties, movable and immovable, of "proclaimed offenders" or people who fail to appear before courts despite warrants being issued against them. The proposed law will be applicable to NRIs marrying Indian women within or even outside India, according to the bill. Besides, two others bills - the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill and the National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill - have been referred to Parliament's standing committee on information technology and the panel on agriculture respectively, to report within two months.

Gopio Health Council to honor four at its Indian Diaspora Health Summit

(By our staff reporter) New Jersey- GOPIO Health Council will honor four at its Third Health Summit for Indian Diaspora, an all-day event, to be held at the TV Asia Studio in Edison, New Jersey on Saturday, October 12th. The awardees are recognized for their contribution in the health field as well as for promoting health awareness among the Indian Diaspora community. The awardees are Rahul Shukla, CEO, S.S. White Technologies & Shukla Medical - For achievement and contributions in manufacturing latest medical equipment; Hitesh Bhatt, Bhatt Foundation Inc. - Achievement and Contributions in Health Care Technology; Padma Shri H.R. Shah, Chairman &

CEO, TV Asia - For Promoting Health Awareness among the Indian Diaspora and Sabinsa Corporation - For achievement and contributions in Health Supplements. The Health Summit is an initiative of GOPIO's Health Council. Its goal is to improve the health of people of Indian origin by raising awareness of current and emerging health issues affecting them, and by promoting preventive practices and sharing information to better manage chronic diseases. The speakers and panelists will discuss on the diseases which are prone to the Indian Diaspora and how to treat or prevent them using modern medicine as well as alternative medicine.

Social Security Announces 1.6 Percent Benefit Increase for 2020

(News Agencies) New York : Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 69 million Americans will increase 1.6 percent in 2020, the Social Security Administration announced today. The 1.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 63 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2020. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2019. (Note: some people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits). The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$137,700 from \$132,900.

Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are normally notified by mail in early December about their new benefit amount. Most people who receive Social Security payments will be able to view their COLA notice online through their my Social Security account. People may create or access their my Social Security account online at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. Information about Medicare changes for 2020, when announced, will be available at www.medicare.gov. For Social Security beneficiaries receiving Medicare, Social Security will not be able to compute their new benefit amount until after the Medicare premium amounts for 2020 are announced. Final 2020 benefit amounts will be communicated to beneficiaries in December through the mailed COLA notice and my Social Security's Message Center. The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated.



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Turkey agrees with US to pause Syria assault while Kurds withdraw

Trump paved the way for the week-long Turkish incursion by withdrawing US troops but he later imposed sanctions and threatened to destroy the NATO ally's economy as he came under fire at home.



(News Agencies) Turkey has agreed to suspend its Syria offensive for five days and will end the assault if Kurdish-led forces withdraw from a safe zone along the border, US Vice President Mike Pence and Turkish officials announced Thursday after high-stakes talks. The agreement for the 120-hour pause eased what had escalated into an unprecedented crisis between the United States and Turkey, but critics quickly accused President Donald Trump of again

abandoning Kurdish allies. Under the deal reached after Pence flew to Ankara, Kurdish forces will have to withdraw from an area 32 kilometres (20 miles) deep, becoming a "safe zone" long sought by Turkey, which brands the fighters as "terrorists". Trump paved the way for the week-long Turkish incursion by withdrawing US troops but he later imposed sanctions and threatened to destroy the NATO ally's economy as he came under fire at home.

After talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that stretched hours longer than expected, Pence told reporters that Turkey's operation "will be halted entirely on completion" of the pullout of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and, following that, the US would withdraw sanctions. Pence said the United States would work with the PG, the Kurdish fighters who dominate the SDF, "to facilitate an orderly withdrawal in the next 120 hours." SDF chief Mazlum Abdi said the forces were "ready to abide by the ceasefire" covering the area from Ras al-Ain to Tal Abyad. But James Jeffrey, the US pointman on Syria, acknowledged that the Kurdish fighters were not happy and that Washington was using "a carrot and a stick" with

threats of sanctions to enforce the deal. "There's no doubt that the YPG wishes that they could stay in these areas," he told reporters travelling from Ankara with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said more than 300,000 civilians had been displaced within Syria since the start of the assault, calling it one of the largest upheavals since Syria's civil war began in 2011. The monitor said nearly 500 people have been killed including dozens of civilians, the majority on the Kurdish side. - 'Hell of a leader' - Turkey has faced wide condemnation, with many European countries including Germany imposing

embargoes. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu insisted to journalists in Ankara that Turkey was "suspending the operation, not halting it". "This is not a ceasefire. A ceasefire is reached between the two legitimate parties." Ankara considers YPG militants to be an extension the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) -- a group that has fought a bloody insurgency inside Turkey for 35 years. Trump hailed the deal, reached after more than four hours of talks led by Pence, as "a great day for civilisation". "I want to thank the Kurds, because they were incredibly happy with this solution," he said during a visit to Texas. "This is a solution that really -- well it saved their lives, frankly."

A day after the leak of a letter in which Trump warned Erdogan not to be a "fool," Trump hailed the Turkish president as "a friend of mine", adding: "He's a hell of a leader." Erdogan on Twitter called for action to "defeat terrorism," saying "I am confident this joint effort will promote peace and stability in our region." Erdogan, who like Trump has faced political setbacks at home, found wide domestic support for the operation. But Trump faced accusations even from usual supporters that his withdrawal of 1,000 US troops -- practically the entire US contingent in the region -- betrayed Kurdish militants who bore the brunt of the fight against the Islamic State group in recent years.

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The stepchild of the Rio Earth Summit may finally get its due

Desertification ended ancient civilisations. The world is facing the same threat. The Delhi meet offers a plan



What is common to the Harappans in the Indus Valley, the Sumerians and Babylonians in West Asia, the Mayans in Central America, the Anasazi of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, or even the Norse Settlement in Greenland? All these ancient civilisations fell prey to desertification. It is the process by which land in arid and semi-arid areas first gets degraded by human activities and prolonged drought; then the soil loses productivity; and, eventually, vegetation and forest cover thin out. The past is a warning. Drought and desertification

responsible for 12 million hectares of land lost annually. That is 23 hectares of land every minute. India has 16.7% of world population but only 2.4% of land. Nearly a third of this area has experienced desertification.

In September, India hosted the 14th Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Along with the conventions on climate change and biodiversity, UNCCD was an outcome of the Rio Summit on Environment and Development in 1992. Back then, the conjunctive use of "and" signalled a

political division. Rich countries wanted to discuss climate change; poorer nations focused on development. Desertification was impacting agriculture and undermining growth in many parts of the developing world. The links between climate change, desertification and biodiversity have been more clearly established now.

Emerging from CoP14, the New Delhi Declaration promotes "land-based solutions for climate action and biodiversity conservation". A voluntary target of achieving land degradation neutrality

(LDN) by 2030 was also welcomed. LDN is not just about afforestation but ecological revitalisation of degraded landscapes to help communities become more food secure, get access to clean water, and sequester more carbon (up to 3 billion tonnes annually). Initially targeting to restore 21 million hectares by 2030, at CoP14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that this would be raised to 26 million hectares. Land cannot be restored without better water governance. A changing climate is likely to increase the intensity and frequency of droughts. By impacting land productivity, droughts exacerbate a vicious cycle — continuing overdraft of groundwater to support agriculture; even lesser water available to restore ecosystems; more erosion and desertification.

Changes in agricultural practices will be fundamental to land restoration. Intensive farming alters soil chemistry and reduces fertility. Flood irrigation

makes soil more saline. Despite such long-term damage to soil, without alternatives, farmers continue unsustainable farming practices. When land has degraded, they fall victim to forced migration. By 2045, 135 million people could be displaced thanks to desertification. Agriculture is a function of seeds, soil and water. The green revolution used high-yielding varieties of seeds, intensively applied chemical fertilisers, and massively relied on (ground)water. India now needs a green revolution 2.0, which would restore soil health and increase water conservation, efficiency and productivity. The reintroduction of coarse (more nutritious and climate resilient) grains, such as millets, into our diets could give farmers opportunities to adopt new practices. Agroforestry and natural farming are unlikely to move beyond buzzwords unless there is focus on land restoration, measuring yields can increase, and linking

marginal farmers to markets to boost incomes. Only then incentives would change. Land, climate change and renewables also intertwine. CEEW's researchers and collaborators have found benefits in collocating solar installations in drylands with a switch to cash crops. Their investigations reveal that water inputs needed to clean solar panels were similar to what was needed for growing aloe vera. Collocating the two would maximise land and water-use efficiency. The water productivity of a grid-connected solar photovoltaic installation exceeds other land uses (over 250-1,500 times growing regular crops in northwest India). When collocated with aloe cultivation, water productivity and economic benefits are 30% higher; with microgrids, returns are 40% higher. As with climate negotiations, UNCCD has been plagued by unmet demands for financing to control desertification. Despite links to climate change, rich countries oppose allocating money from the Green Climate Fund or the Adaptation Fund. This story is all too familiar. The New Delhi Declaration is titled "Investing in Land and Unlocking Opportunities". To realise the promise, ecosystem services of restored land must be valued and land titles must be awarded to eligible forest-dwelling and indigenous communities. Opportunities in new crops, sustainable agricultural practices, water efficiency and collocated renewable energy would then create incentives to attract public and private investment. The stepchild of the Rio conventions could finally get its due.

Arunabha Ghosh

Structural shifts in West Asia

The fate of the Kurds is a reflection of major changes in the region

The fate of the Kurds is a parable for the future of West Asian geopolitics. The Kurds used the collapse of central authority in Syria and Iraq to carve out semi-autonomous regions for themselves. Baghdad has since reasserted its authority. In Syria, the Kurds leveraged the United States to maintain their independence from Damascus and shield themselves from a hostile Turkey. With US President Donald Trump suddenly deciding the Kurds were expendable, first Turkey and now Syria have begun eating away at the enclave. The crudity of the Turkish attack has earned Ankara international opprobrium while the Syrians have arrived as saviours. Both governments, however, seek the Kurdish enclave's disappearance. Ethnic armies like the Kurds, terror



networks like the Islamic State, Mesopotamia to carve out fiefdoms. Some, like the Kurds, played a traditional game of

seeking an external patron to balance against powerful regional players. Some regional players, for example, Turkey and Iran, saw an opportunity to establish themselves as local hegemons.

Three geopolitical trends now seem evident. One, the chaos that gave birth to the Kurds enclave is retreating. This return to normal borders is likely to be bloody and messy. Two, external players will play a shrinking role in determining West Asia's future. Three, West Asian politics will be about the interplay of its regional powers. Unfortunately, most believe power comes from the barrel of a gun, sometimes a gun bought via a barrel of crude. Today's Kurdish tragedy can be expected to be reprised in the coming years.

The judiciary needs to introspect

The SC is held in the highest regard and must live up to its legacy by making necessary corrections

It is an irony of Indian democracy that citizens have more faith often in unelected institutions than elected representatives. Surveys have shown that faith in the armed forces and institutions such as the Election Commission often surpasses the faith citizens have in the legislature or the executive. But if there is one institution that has a special place, in both constitutional design as well as popular sentiment, it is the judiciary.

Our founders carefully constructed a system of checks and balances, and separation of powers. Aware of the dangers of populism, and of the temptation of the political leadership to bypass the law, India's constitution designed a judiciary meant to be truly independent. The institution, to its credit, has lived up to this faith. Even at the most difficult of times, such as the Emergency, during which the role of the Supreme Court (SC) has been legitimately questioned as having aided the subversion of fundamental rights, it is instructive to remember that at least some within the institution sought to uphold the law.

That is why recent events must cause concern to all those who care about the health of Indian democracy and institutional integrity. Four features of the judiciary, particularly the SC's, recent actions merit attention.

The first is what the legal scholar Gautam Bhatia has termed as "constitutional evasion". One of the starkest examples of this is the court's treatment of petitions related to the Centre's moves on Jammu and Kashmir. At stake here are two issues — the constitutionality of the government's push in August, endorsed by Parliament, to nullify Article 370, bifurcate the state and make it a Union Territory (UT); and the restrictions and detentions which have affected fundamental rights.

Irrespective of one's views on the desirability of the government's decision on the constitutional changes, once the issue reached the court, it was incumbent on the SC to take it up urgently. This is because the issue is time-sensitive. The administrative implications are playing out; the formalisation of the UT status will happen soon. The decision to first put off the issue till October, and then postpone it till November, will almost present the court with a fait accompli. The citizens of the Valley — who enjoy equal rights as citizens elsewhere — have also had to live with (now partially lifted) restrictions. This too is in abeyance in court, though it did ask the government on Wednesday to present reasons for such moves.

Another example of this evasion was during the controversy regarding the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at the end of last year. Once again, one can have distinct views on whether the government's decision to end the then director Alok Verma's term before his stipulated term was correct or not. But

once he approached the court, the SC sat on the issue till his tenure was about to end, and he would retire. The issue became almost infructuous.

It may be instructive here to look at the example of the United Kingdom Supreme Court, which declared PM Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue Parliament as null and void. Lady Brenda Hale, the president of the court, categorically said that the decision to prorogue was "unlawful" because it undermined the Parliament's role. The hearings continued for three days; the order was delivered in a week; and the legislature was back to doing what it was meant to do. The second issue is the expansion of the sealed envelope jurisdiction. India's judicial system is adversarial. One side presents its evidence and arguments, and the other side, which has access to this evidence, then counters it and vice versa. It is then, based on the legal merits of the evidence and arguments offered, that the court takes a considered call. To be sure, the use of sealed envelopes is justified — especially for sensitive information which should not be a part of open record. But over the past few years, in multiple cases, from Rafale to the latest instance of the arrest of P Chidambaram, courts at different levels have accepted evidence in a sealed envelope — with the other side not quite knowing what is being presented. In such cases, even if the court is taking the best decision, it leaves room for doubt.

Unfortunately, this has also coincided with courts, including the apex one, moving away from the usual practice of bail being the norm, and not an exception. Together, sealed envelopes and the emerging notion on bail have only served to threaten and erode the rights of individuals.

The third issue is the collegium. There is substantial literature to suggest that the collegium system in itself has not worked adequately. The SC itself acknowledged this even as it scrapped a suggested alternative, the National Judicial Appointments Commission. The bedrock of judicial independence is appointments without interference from other branches. Even if this system needs reform, it cannot be anyone's case that the executive wields disproportionate influence. This is so for a simple reason. The judiciary is often sitting in judgement on executive actions; the state is a party to many cases; and both independence and the appearance of independence is crucial. As the retired SC judge Madan Lokur argued persuasively in The Indian Express on Wednesday, the executive's influence over appointments and postings appears to have increased.

Tech Companies Are Destroying Democracy and the Free Press

As the presidential election approaches, the cracks in the digital facade are once again showing.

Facebook just removed an "I Love America" page, run by Ukrainians, which pushed recycled pro-Trump imagery from the Internet Research Agency, the Russian group that tried to influence the 2016 election. As it turned out, "I Love America" wasn't state sponsored — the Ukrainians were just running the page for the advertising money. A similar page with falsified content, "Police Lives Matter," is now run out of Kosovo.

These two phony Facebook pages illustrate the crisis of the free press and democracy: Advertising revenue that used to go to quality journalism is now captured by big tech intermediaries, and some of that money now goes to dishonest, low-quality and fraudulent content.

This is the first presidential election happening after the business model for journalism collapsed. Advertising revenue for print newspapers has fallen by two-thirds since 2006. From 2008 to 2018, the number of newspaper reporters dropped 47 percent. Two-thirds of counties in America now have no daily newspaper, and 1,300 communities have lost all local coverage. Even outlets native to the web, like BuzzFeed and HuffPost, have laid off reporters. This problem is a global one; for example, in Australia from 2014 to 2018, the number of journalists in traditional print publications fell by 20 percent. The signaling functions of news brands and the cultural barriers meant to guard against distorting effects of advertising have broken down. In their place, a dysfunctional information ecosystem has emerged, characterized by polarization, addiction and conspiracy

theories. In Europe and in the United States, young men learn race science on YouTube. In Brazil, citizens learn that Zika is spread by vaccines. As the Center for Humane Technology puts it: "Today's tech platforms are caught in a race to the bottom of the brain stem to extract human attention. It's a race we're all losing." There are two drivers of this crisis. The first is the concentration of online advertising revenue in the hands of Google and Facebook — global monopolies sitting astride public discourse, diverting money that used to go to publishers to themselves. The second is an ethical breakdown — a natural consequence of advertising financing an information utility like a social network or search engine — which I call "conflicted communications." It's tempting to blame the rise of the internet for all of this, but it's important to recognize that technology is shaped by law. Advertising, publishing and information distribution operate in publicly structured markets. In the past 40 years, the rules underlying these markets have undergone a radical reorganization. As the communications historian Richard John argues, for roughly 200 years (beginning with the creation of the Post Office in 1791), American policymakers generally sought to decentralize media power and keep communication networks neutral. In the late 1970s, policymakers reversed their presumptions. They relaxed antitrust law, eliminated the fairness doctrine and eventually allowed the creation of large media conglomerates through the Telecommunications Act of 1996.



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Editor in Chief & Publisher :
Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor (Political Affairs-India) :
Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Photographers: Hamad

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Special Correspondent :

Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

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Phone: 917 612 3158 TelFax : 516 342 1076

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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Informal meets are more pointed

Trade is a key factor in Sino-India ties. Success has been limited, but India has to keep trying

Gains of the Mamallapuram informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping were incremental and optical. The most concrete takeaway was the decision to establish a “High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue”, with three intersecting objectives: “To deepen economic cooperation”; to achieve “enhanced trade and commercial relations, as well as to better balance” bilateral trade, and to “encourage mutual investments in identified sectors through ... a manufacturing partnership”.

This suggests Modi is having another go at his initial bet, in 2014, to offer China greater market access — provided India genuinely gains from Chinese investments, and provided economic engagement moves beyond a buyer-seller relationship. Separately, Modi hopes to continue to press China for greater market access for products and services where Indian companies are competitive. Recent Chinese permission for an Indian pharma company to bid for a drug-supply contract within their public health system represents a new start, but only a first step.

The Indian PM has worked on these assumptions since he came to office five years ago. Success has been limited, but he has little choice, but to try and try again. True, there is a massive composite power differential between the two countries. In 2000, as the 21st century beckoned, China’s GDP was double India’s GDP. By 2014, it was close to five times India’s GDP; as PM, Modi has maintained the ratio — it has not got worse, but it has not better either.

As its economy matures and exports taper, Beijing faces a demand problem. In this context, Indian consumption, while smaller than the West, is not an insignificant market.

That aside the Chinese system has been surprised by the scale of Modi’s victory in the April-May general election. Xi expected to be dealing with a weaker and less sure-footed leader.

All of this may cause China to tweak its approach and treat Modi 2.0 with just that greater bit of understanding. No major shifts are expected; China sees no reason for them. However, on trade and economic relations, where both sides can potentially gain, there remains scope for limited optimism.

At Mamallapuram, the mention of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the mega-free trade agreement being negotiated between Asean and six major partner countries, was telling. For different reasons both China and China-sceptics in Asean are keen for India to sign the RCEP agreement.

China eyes the Indian market. This prospect is leading to upheaval in India, where Modi faces

pressure from those, including within his government and political system, who legitimately argue that RCEP could virtually amount to a troublesome FTA with China. On the other hand, countries that worry Asia is becoming a one-horse race are concerned that if India opts out RCEP — an ambitious blueprint for Asian economic integration, with potential strategic implications down the line — New Delhi would hand Beijing a long-term advantage.

Modi knows he cannot walk away from RCEP; that would undermine gains of his foreign policy and “Act East” approach. Yet, he cannot wish away the cautionary voices at home either. The terms of India’s entry into RCEP — both in the text as well as using a wider economic and diplomatic metric — could well be dependent on what comfort or space China has offered India in Mamallapuram. This political understanding — or its absence — will likely determine Modi’s big RCEP decision. Not for the



first time the closure of a trade issue could come down to a political deal at the highest level.

If this is indeed so, it will validate the reason India first suggested the informal dialogue option to China two years ago. It was an effort to engage with the Chinese leader as an organic politician rather than the chief representative of a political bureaucracy or technocracy, guided at each step by aides, sherpas and minders. The nub was: Could two powerful in their countries in over a generation — Modi chosen democratically and Xi oligarchically — overcome the inertia of their systems for at least some advance? The answer is not overwhelmingly positive, but neither is it conclusive. Diplomatic engagement goes through cycles. In the

post-Cold War period, as the European Union expanded and the World Trade Organization was founded, as new trade and related agreements were signed, the salience of delegation-level engagement grew. A principal — whether a prime minister or president — flanked by sectoral specialists and nudged by them; the idea of government as a managerial, non-ideological exercise, meant to disrupt least amid economic growth: This was the consensus. Today, a shift is discernible. Delegation-level talks have declined in relative importance. One-to-one, principal-to-principal engagement has gained ground. In meeting after meeting, the “without aides” component is given more latitude than the formal delegation sit-down; and for two reasons.

One, Big Politics is back on the international stage. Political deals, calls, even grandstanding have a greater policy autonomy than say 20 years ago. Two, this is an era of defining shifts both within countries and in the international system. Societies have responded by electing or selecting strong leaders, empowered by popular will or domestic elites. The chosen individuals are reflective of long-term social processes at home. From India to China, from Saudi Arabia to Japan, from Trumpism to Brexitism, there is an attempt to understand a country’s evolution by understanding this “special” leader’s impulses. Seen through this prism, the Mamallapuram informal summit reflects a global pattern.

Ashok Malik

A Nobel prize that gives us hope

To know what works and what doesn’t to end global poverty



Whether economics is a science or not is a longstanding debate.

Developing sophisticated models and powerful theories have captured the imagination of thousands of young economics students. There is an equal number of practitioners that believes such abstract modelling is very distant from the real world. These are

defence, especially in a democracy, is that it is possible to help the have-nots by making policies directed towards them. Many such policies have been made and implemented. Yet, poverty persists. What’s to blame? The Nobel Committee’s decision to award this year’s prize to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer is an

not esoteric debates. Even though the global economy has grown faster than ever under capitalism, millions have failed to reap its benefits. Capitalism’s

endorsement of the fact that those seeking to reduce poverty would do better to know how the poor behave. It might not be enough to announce a free vaccination programme to reduce child mortality. Giving a couple of kilogrammes of pulses or a steel bowl might be the critical factor in determining whether mothers walk the extra mile to bring their children to the vaccination centre. Banerjee and Duflo have set up what they call a poverty action lab at MIT to develop these insights. They and their comrades devote a lot of time conducting randomised controlled field trials (RCTs), particularly in India, to find out what works and what doesn’t to fight poverty. That they’ve been awarded the highest honour in the discipline is recognition of the fact that there’s still hope to

fight poverty without succumbing to the polarising debate between right and left wing populism. Like all scholars, Banerjee et al too have been criticised. Their peers have accused them of belittling theoretical and structural constraints in the fight against poverty. It is true that RCTs cannot replace macroeconomics. RCTs can’t help us understand recessions which can throw millions into poverty at once. That is no reason to ignore their work and contribution in the fight against poverty, though. If there’s one reason why this year’s Nobel in economics should be celebrated, it is the following: Poverty can’t be eradicated without recognising that the poor have an agency and RCTs are needed to understand how exactly such agencies work.

When China and Nepal became 'strategic partners'

How ties evolve now will depend on Kathmandu's ability to manage geopolitics and project implementation



The visit may have been short, but it was heavy on optics and impact. With Chinese President Xi Jinping's Kathmandu visit now concluded, there is a newfound confidence in the Nepali establishment that much-vaunted infrastructure projects, not least the Kerung-Kathmandu railway plan, will get the momentum they were in dire need of. "The bilateral relationship between Nepal and China has entered a new phase," reads the joint communiqué, elevating ties to one of "strategic partnership" for the first time. How that strategic partnership will come to be defined remains to be seen, but within the statement are a few markers that suggest the way forward for Nepal-China ties. First, both countries have agreed to intensify the implementation of projects under the Belt and

Road Initiative, now to be developed under the Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network umbrella first announced in 2018. Although the funding modality of the Detailed Project Report for the railway is yet to be decided, China has agreed to start work. More importantly, the rail network will extend to Pokhara and Lumbini.

But the railway is just one part of the bonanza, and dependent on the Tibet rail network first reaching Kerung itself. With much of the focus remaining on connectivity, China will first build a critical road stretch between Kathmandu and Rasuwagadhi that will reduce the distance to the northern border significantly. The Rasuwagadhi border has emerged as a key alternative to the Tatopani border, which recently opened after the 2015

earthquake damaged it. Nepal's foreign minister, Pradeep Gyawali, said the railway project is complicated, and expects the tunnel project to be completed before the former.

Nepal's quest for connectivity received a further boost with China agreeing on principle to develop the key border points of Mustang, north of Pokhara, and Kimathanka in the east. Along with Hilsa in the west, these border crossings will be the roadheads for the three north-south road corridors China has also agreed to develop. Xi also announced Nepalese rupee (NRs) 56 billion in assistance over the next two years, before saying China would assist Nepal in becoming a "land-linked" country from a "land-locked" one. More than two dozen agreements were signed, but the substance of Xi's visit was clear. China prioritises Nepal, as a Kantipur editorial said, and offered to closely partner with Nepal for connectivity. If the projects and agreements move forward as expected, the editorial said, it will free Nepal from its dependence on India for imports. Although Nepal's current tilt to the north began after the 2015 blockade, Xi's visit marks a new landmark in bilateral relations. Beyond the

optics of a sitting Chinese president visiting the country in 23 years, the declaration of a strategic partnership will be of particular interest in the days to come. Local analysts have interpreted this as the importance of Nepal in China's worldview.

There had been talk of an extradition treaty being signed before Xi's visit, a development that was quashed by the government. But discussions have been ongoing, and the statement has called for "an early conclusion" on the treaty. Whether the delay has been because of Nepal's international refugee commitments, or the fact that it hasn't updated the old 1953 agreement with India despite the latter's insistence, isn't clear.

However, let that not deter attention from the agreement to "strengthen cooperation between the law enforcement agencies on information exchanges, capacity building and training", with 100 Nepali security personnel travelling to China every year till 2022. This ties in with recent Chinese assistance in security infrastructure development and greater aid to districts bordering Tibet. Beijing's largesse also indicates its satisfaction with

Kathmandu's cooperation in all matters Tibetan.

But the road ahead isn't as smooth as it seems. The US is keen Kathmandu make its position clear on the Indo-Pacific strategy, while China itself may have issues with Nepal's lack of movement on prior commitments. Xi's statement at the welcome dinner saying "We've completed projects we've built and initiated. We've done the same in China (translation mine)" has been alluded as him advising Nepal to do the same. Further, despite increasing rapprochement between Delhi and Beijing, a new paradigm hasn't appeared in Nepal-India relations post 2015.

However, the mood in Kathmandu is upbeat. Xi's visit paid attention to the cultural and people-to-people links between the two countries, and it is likely that Chinese tourists will once again top the number of visitors to Nepal next year even as more exchanges will take place. "The flame runs high when everyone adds wood to the fire," Xi quoted a Chinese proverb in an op-ed published across major newspapers before his visit. The fire has been lit. Now it is Nepal's turn to put in the wood.

Amish Raj Mulmi

MGNREGA can revive Rural India

The scheme needs a higher budget. Finance it by rationalising the regressive subsidy regime

Missing in the slew of recent policy measures to arrest the current economic slowdown is any serious policy antidote for the crisis confronting India's rural economy. What makes this policy silence particularly deafening is the fact that only a few months ago, when elections were round the corner, the rural economy was top priority. In January this year, PM-KISAN was announced and implemented with great gusto. Now, five months after the election, even as the government has belatedly acknowledged the accelerating economic crisis, implementation has slowed down. Disbursements for the third instalment have been significantly lower than the first two instalments which were paid out in the midst of the election campaign.

Perhaps the electoral victory has shifted the government's

political calculus, and emboldened it to focus on other aspects of the economy, specifically the corporate and financial sector in order to boost private investment. But doing this at the cost of focusing on the rural economy is a serious misstep.

For one, current policy measures, including the big ticket corporate tax cuts, are unlikely, in the near term, to address the fall in aggregate demand which lies at the heart of the current slowdown. As economist Himanshu has highlighted, India is witnessing an unprecedented decline in consumption expenditure. Using National Sample Survey Office data, he calculates that consumption expenditure declined at a rate of 4.4% per annum in rural India and 4.8% in urban areas between 2015-16 and 2017-18.

Second, a slew of policy

missteps played an important role in accelerating the pace of the consumption slowdown in rural India. These include an inflation targeting monetary policy regime that moved the terms of trade against agriculture, demonetisation and associated measures such as taxing high value cash transactions, and of course, the Goods and Services Tax. Together, these served to reduce liquidity and disrupt established modes of transacting in rural markets. These policy missteps require specific correctives. A consumption slowdown in a fragile rural economy is a likely indicator of a rise in poverty. Rural India, thus, urgently needs a stimulus (arguably even more than corporate India) to revive consumption demand, in the short-term.

The two most widely debated policy tools through which stimulus could be introduced are



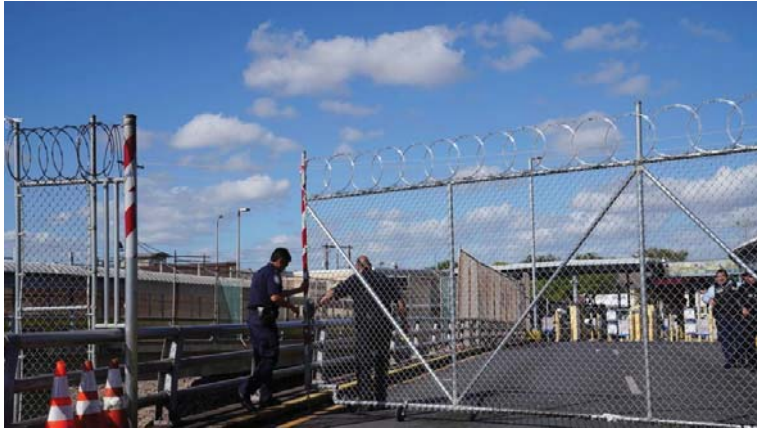
an increased Minimum Support Price (MSP) and PM-KISAN. Interestingly, many state governments have recently followed in the Union government's footsteps by announcing their own versions of farmer income support. These are far more expansive in their budgetary commitments than PM-KISAN.

Both these instruments, however, have limitations. Increasing MSPs risk distorting prices and crop choices that can make long-term agricultural reforms difficult. Moreover, the government is sitting on large, undistributed stockpile of food grains which limits the space for expanded procurement. Income support schemes avoid the

distortionary effects of MSPs but confront serious implementation challenges. As the recently released RBI report on state finances 2018-19 pointed out, the success of these schemes is dependent on underlying conditions like completing the digitisation of land records and linking them to bank accounts. This cannot be done overnight, the rushed roll-out of PMKISAN notwithstanding. Telangana, the first state to implement and popularise income support to farmers took nearly two years to get its land records database right. There is, however, a strong case to be made for an improved MGNREGA to serve as the vehicle for delivering a rural stimulus.

311 Indians deported by Mexico to arrive in Delhi today

The INM said there was no precedent in its history of the trans-Atlantic deportation of such a large number of people by air.



(News Agencies) Mexico has deported a group of 311 illegal migrants from India, the first such action taken by the country since it enhanced efforts to crack down on people using its territory to sneak into the US. The Instituto Nacional de Migración

(INM) or National Institute of Migration of Mexico said in a statement the Indians – 310 men and one woman of different ages – left for New Delhi on a chartered flight from Toluca international airport on Wednesday night. The flight is expected to arrive in

New Delhi on Friday morning, Indian and Mexican officials said. “We are aware that a chartered flight with 311 Indian deportees has taken off from Mexico. The external affairs ministry is coordinating closely with other agencies and the Mexican embassy in New Delhi for their safe return,” said an official who declined to be identified. The INM said there was no precedent in its history of the trans-Atlantic deportation of such a large number of people by air. The Indian nationals did not have documentation to stay in Mexico and their deportation was arranged after their identities were verified by Indian authorities, people familiar with developments said. No further deportations were

expected, they added. The deportation was done in “excellent communication and coordination” with Indian authorities and under the provisions of the migration law and regulations, the Mexican statement said. The deportees are being accompanied by federal migration agents and officials of the National Guard of Mexico. The Indian nationals were detained by immigration authorities in the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Baja California, Veracruz, Chiapas, Sonora, Mexico City, Durango and Tabasco. They were taken to the Acayucan migration station in Veracruz to verify their identities before being put on the chartered flight. In May, US President

Donald Trump threatened to slap tariffs on all Mexican imports to pressure the country to do more to crack down on illegal migrants trying to cross the border. Trump also said the tariffs would increase until the entry of illegal migrants stopped but the two countries subsequently agreed on a 90-day window for Mexico to crack down on migration. In recent years, Indian migrants have made efforts to illegally cross over to the US from Mexico. The number of migrants detained along the southern US border over the past 12 months rose to nearly 1 million, according to official data. In September, INM reported that 42 Indians were among 167 illegal migrants detained by authorities in Veracruz state.

NCB preps to upgrade war against drugs, readies list of 100 mafia bosses

According to home ministry and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials, all the 14 zonal directors of the NCB have been told to identify drug kingpins in India so that the chain of distribution is smashed at the top.



(News Agencies) For the first time, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is in the process of preparing a list of the 100 top drug mafia kingpins in India and initiate action against them in the coming fortnight under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) Act. Special focus will also be on cocaine suppliers in Mumbai, given the abuse of the substance in the city, especially the film industry, as well as Pune, Goa, Bengaluru and Delhi. According to home ministry and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials, all the 14 zonal directors of the NCB have been told to identify drug kingpins in India so that the chain of distribution is smashed at the top.

With a database of PITNDPS cases in the past decade, the zonal directors have already been sending names of top drug mafia figures to the ministry and NCB rather than confine themselves to drug pushers and peddlers. Preventive arrests will also be made on the basis of this kingpin list. The decision to crack down on Indian drug lords comes after a marked increase in heroin trafficking was

noticed through the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. Since August 2018, there have been seizures of nearly 180

kilograms of heroin through the LoC.

A kilogram of heroin costs between Rs 2.5-3 crore in the international market while the cost is around Rs 30-50 lakh per kilogram in India. What came as a shock is that India consumes nearly one ton of heroin every day, which is worth more than Rs 100 crore.

While Afghanistan and Pakistan remain the main suppliers to India through the western borders and the sea, the Myanmar-Northeast axis is another major source of heroin and chemical drugs like Yaba (a combination of a number of stimulants), methamphetamines

and ketamines. The trade is essentially controlled in India by the Israeli, Russian, Italian and Nigerian mafia.

Just as heroin from Afghanistan is used to fund terror groups against India, a section of the non-resident Indian (NRI) Sikh community based in Canada is used to supply Colombian cocaine into India and onward to Australia. The route used by cocaine smugglers is South America to Canada and thereon to India through the Sikh diaspora net. It is this group which is behind promoting secessionist activity against India, with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence encouraging

the drug smuggling to fund terror. There has been an increase in maritime trafficking of heroin in the Arabian Sea for supplies to India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. This year alone, nearly 500 kilograms of heroin has been intercepted off the coast of Gujarat as well as on the high seas from a Pakistani boat meant for Sri Lanka. “The drug menace is huge in India with the country also being the number 2 supplier of drug precursors in the world. The time has come to take direct action against drug lords in India rather than chasing fixers and abusers,” said a senior NCB official who didn't want to be named.

RBI shows concern over farmers pawning their gold to secure large loans

The September report by RBI's “internal working group to review agricultural credit” said it was likely that “farmers are availing agricultural loans against gold as collateral”, stating that this was “a matter of concern”.

(News Agencies) Farmers may be mortgaging family gold to take on larger agricultural loans than they actually need to meet cultivation costs, according to a report by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which has cautioned against a debt problem in the farming community.

The September report by RBI's “internal working group to review agricultural credit” said it was likely that “farmers are availing agricultural loans against gold as collateral”, stating that this was “a matter of concern”. High indebtedness has long plagued the country's farmers and is said to be one of the reasons for suicides among the farm community. Rough patches in the agriculture sector have often necessitated large, populist farm loan waivers, which limit the ability of governments to make growth-propelling investment in the sector.

“The predominance of agricultural loan against gold as collateral is a matter of



concern as the quantum of loan must have been de-linked from the scale of finance,” the report stated. The scale of finance is an economic jargon for the actual costs of cultivation on a per hectare basis.

This trend of taking out larger loans against gold could be particularly true of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka, the study said. The government subsidises short-term crop loans to make farming cheaper. Moreover, banks must necessarily lend to farmers because agriculture is a “priority lending sector”. For instance, all

scheduled commercial banks must direct 40% of their adjusted net bank credit towards priority sector lending.

Farmers get crop loans at a cheaper 7% as compared to consumer loans, which range from anything between 12% and 14%. For those making timely repayments, the effective rate of interest is even lower at 4%. Banks tend to lend more easily to farmers who additionally pawn their gold as “these are secured loans”, the RBI study said. “This ultimately leads to diversion of funds and consequently, high incidence of indebtedness among the farmers,” it added.

The study called on banks to “flag agricultural loans sanctioned against gold as collateral”. According to a 2018 National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development survey, “more than one in two agricultural households surveyed in 2018” were indebted. The size of debt owed by them was nearly equal to their annual incomes.

India urges Pakistan not to levy \$20 service fee on pilgrims using Kartarpur Corridor



India and Pakistan are expected to sign the agreement on the corridor, which will link Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur to Darbar Sahib gurdwara in Kartarpur, despite serious misgivings in New Delhi over conditions such as the service fee.

(News Agencies) India on Thursday urged Pakistan not to levy a service fee of \$20 on pilgrims using the Kartarpur Corridor and expressed the hope that the agreement on the project can be concluded and signed in time for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. "After several rounds of discussion with Pakistan, we have reached an agreement on all other issues, except the matter of service fee. Pakistan insists on levying a fee

of \$20 (approximately Rs 1,420) on all pilgrims," external affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said. "We have urged Pakistan not to do so in the interests of devotees, and also because this is a P2P (people-to-people) initiative. We hope that the agreement can be concluded and signed in time for the great event," he said.

Kumar was to queries from the media on whether the agreement

for the corridor had not yet been finalised due to Pakistan's insistence on the service fee. Pakistan handed over the final draft agreement to India last week. "The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor is an important people-to-people initiative taken by India to commemorate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji," Kumar said. India and Pakistan are expected to sign the agreement on the corridor, which

will link Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur to Darbar Sahib gurdwara in Kartarpur, despite serious misgivings in New Delhi over conditions such as the service fee. There is unlikely to be any joint event by the two sides when the corridor is thrown open to Indian pilgrims as part of celebrations marking the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion.

CBI files case on child pornography

The case was registered after a preliminary inquiry, a precursor to a first information report (FIR), on the basis of a note verbale (diplomatic communication) was received from Embassy of Germany on January 31.



(News Agencies) Acting on information from Germany, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against seven people for allegedly being part of international WhatsApp groups in which child sexual abuse material were being circulated, officials said on Monday. The case was registered after a preliminary inquiry, a precursor to a first information report (FIR), on the basis of a note verbale (diplomatic communication)

was received from Embassy of Germany on January 31. Germany had informed about Sasche Treppke, who was sentenced to five years in prison there for involvement in sexual abuse of children and distributing child pornography. It emerged during the investigation that he was part of 29 WhatsApp groups where child porn was being shared. These groups had seven Indian mobile numbers too, officials added.

PMO's response offers glimmer of hope for Anjediva island devotee

The Anjediva island off the coast of Karwar, has two historical churches built by the Portuguese who occupied the island in 1506 and surrendered it in 1961.

(News Agencies) Catholic devotees, who have been barred by the Navy since 2005 from visiting the Anjediva island, off the coast of Karwar, to celebrate the feasts of the two churches located there, have sensed a glimmer of hope. In response to a petition before the Prime Minister, the PMO has directed the Goa Chief Secretary to provide within 15 days details of the issue, including why they have been barred and the status of the churches located there.

"It's a small victory," Natividade D'Sa who petitioned the Prime Minister said. The Anjediva island, a small strip of land off the coast of Karwar, that is part of the state of Goa is currently under the Navy's control. On this island lie two historical churches built by the Portuguese who occupied the island in 1506 and surrendered it in 1961, 48-hours after mainland Goa was surrendered to India. The people of Goa, especially those from the southernmost

taluka bordering Karnataka used to religiously make the pilgrimage by boat to the island twice a year for the feasts until 2004. From 2005 when the neighbouring Seabird naval base was up and running, the Navy has blocked access to the island, and despite fervent pleas to allow restricted access to the island to celebrate the feast as well as to check on the upkeep of the churches on the island. "We used to go to the island regularly and I have now written to the Prime Minister to allow us to visit the island twice a year. Now we are old, but want to visit it once again," Natividade de Sa a septuagenarian. He was elated when he received a copy of a letter addressed to the Chief Secretary of Goa, who based on his complaint was directed to provide within 15 days details of the issue as well as the two churches that make up the island to the PMO.

ED seizes, identifies properties worth Rs 3,830 crore of HDIL in PMC Bank Scandal

ED recovered hundreds of documents during raids at the premises of Rakesh Kumar Wadhawan and his son Sarang in the past one week

(News Agencies) The enforcement directorate (ED) on Monday said it has seized and identified assets worth Rs3,830 crore belonging to promoters of HDIL (Housing Development and Infrastructure Ltd) in the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank scandal. Several assets, including 80 unencumbered properties

in and around Mumbai, are being assessed, the agency said in a statement.

The ED recovered hundreds of documents during raids at the premises of Rakesh Kumar Wadhawan and his son Sarang in the past one week. "Documents relating to purchase of 2,112 acre of land have been found. Value of land varies

between Rs 1.5 crore to Rs5 crore per acre. Verification of land details is in progress. The present value of the said land is likely to be more than Rs300 crore," the statement said. Subsequently, the documents reveal that Wadhawans acquired 160 acre land worth Rs125 crore in Sindhurdurg (Maharashtra), 72 acre

land worth Rs70 crore in Kukatpally (Hyderabad), 80 acres land worth Rs110 crore in Greater Noida, one bungalow worth Rs110 crore in Mumbai, a lavish farm house in Alibaug worth Rs80 crore, a 5-acre farm house worth Rs60-70 acre and two overseas properties in the UAE and the UK. It is alleged that Wadhawans, in collusion with PMC Bank MD Joy



Thomas, availed loans in fraudulent manner. Mumbai Police had arrested Wadhawans and Thomas earlier this month. Meanwhile, the RBI on Monday enhanced withdrawal limit for customers of PMC Bank to Rs40,000 per account from Rs25,000 for six months. Earlier in the day, the RBI governor assured that customers' interest would be protected.

Rahul Gandhi is a captain who walked away on seeing Congress ship sink: Asaduddin Owaisi

Asaduddin Owaisi slammed the BJP-led government as he panned the Triple Talaq law and said that the government should give reservation to Muslims just as it has given to Marathas.



(News Agencies) AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi made a scathing attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and said when a ship sinks, the captain evacuates everyone safely but Gandhi is a captain who himself left on seeing Congress ship sink. Owaisi's remarks came during his campaign for a party candidate in Bhiwadi West where he addressed a large gathering.

"When a ship sinks in the middle of a sea, the captain evacuates everyone safely but Gandhi is a captain who himself left after seeing the Congress sinking. Muslims are not alive due to Congress' mercy on us for 70 years, rather we are alive because of the Constitution and by the grace of God," said Owaisi. The AIMIM leader also slammed the BJP-led government even as he panned the Triple Talaq law saying, "The Triple Talaq law is against all the Muslim women. BJP is a long-lasting government which means that this darkness is going to last long." Owaisi also said that the government should give reservation to Muslims just as it has given to Marathas.

Man feeds stray cat, it flees with bag containing Rs 90,000 in Haridwar

The incident happened on Sunday night but the man discovered it on Monday morning when he found the bag full of cash missing. He could not find the bag in its place when he was about to leave for the market.

(News Agencies) Feeding a stray cat proved costly for a man after it escaped with a polythene bag containing about Rs 90,000 from his home in Khadanja Qutubpur village in Haridwar district about 38 km from Haridwar. The man, a meat shop owner, after discovering the loss could only find about Rs 7,000 of the total amount from a nearby field where the cat had taken the bag mistaking it for food. The incident happened on Sunday night but the man discovered it on Monday morning when he found the bag full of cash missing. He could not find the bag in its place when he was about to

leave for the market.

According to Sushil Kumar, a resident of the same village and the husband of the village head, the victim has been identified as one Meenu. "He used to keep his daily income in a polythene bag inside a plastic box kept in an attic inside his house. After every 10 or 15 days, he used to take a portion of the money to buy chickens for his shop from a nearby poultry farm. On Monday morning, he was about to go to the poultry farm when he found the bag missing," he said. Distressed, all the family members started looking for the bag. "When they were looking for the



polythene bag, some of the villagers told them that they had seen a black cat holding a polythene bag in its mouth while running towards a nearby field. Believing them, they soon went towards the field only to find the polythene bag lying there in tatters. They

could only find Rs 7,000 inside it. They also found currency notes worth about Rs 4,000 torn by the cat lying there," said Kumar claiming that he was present on the spot when they found that polythene bag. Despite several attempts, Meenu could not be contacted.

Farooq Abdullah's daughter, sister detained in Srinagar protest on Article 370

Wearing black arm bands and holding placards, the women protestors were not allowed by the police personnel to assemble and were asked to disperse peacefully.

(News Agencies) Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah's sister and daughter were among half a dozen women activists who were detained during a protest march against the abrogation of Article 370, PTI reported.

The senior National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah's sister Suraiya and his daughter Safiya were leading a group of women activists when they were detained, according to the

news agency.

Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah are among hundreds of leaders who are under house arrest after the Centre's move on August 5 to scrap the state's special status and divide it into two Union territories.

The women protestors, who were wearing black arm bands and holding placards, were not allowed by the police to assemble and asked to disperse.

The Central Reserve Police

Force's (CRPF's) women personnel rounded the protestors into police vehicles when they refused and tried to stage a sit-in.

They also tried to stop them from distributing a statement to the media covering the protest.

"We, the women of Kashmir, disapprove the unilateral decision taken by the government of India to revoke Article 370, 35A and downgrade and split the state of Jammu and Kashmir," they

said in the statement.

The women said they feel "betrayed, humiliated and violated as people" as they demanded the restoration of civil liberties and fundamental rights of the citizens. Detainees must be immediately released and demilitarisation of rural and urban areas must be ended, they also demanded. "We express our outrage against the national media for their false/misleading coverage of ground realities in Kashmir," they added.

'Speculative views': Praful Patel after ED notice on alleged land deal with Dawood aide

The ED is among several agencies examining the purported land deal involving Mirchi's relatives for alleged links with Patel.



(News Agencies) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday issued summons to Nationalist Congress Party leader Praful Patel, asking him to appear before it in Mumbai on Friday for questioning in connection with an alleged land deal with late gangster Iqbal Mirchi, who was a close aide of underworld don Dawood Ibrahim,

officials said.

The ED is among several agencies examining the purported land deal involving Mirchi's relatives for alleged links with Patel. According to ED officials, Patel's Millennium Developers Pvt Ltd constructed a building called Ceejay House in 2006-07 and its third and fourth floors were transferred to Mirchi's wife Hajra Iqbal. The land on which the building tower was made is said to be owned by Mirchi. Investigators claim the land

was purchased from the proceeds of crime of money laundering, drugs trafficking and alleged extortion crimes, PTI reported. Patel and the NCP have denied any wrongdoing in the deal and said that the property papers explain that the transaction is "clean and transparent". Shortly after the summons were issued, Patel addressed a press conference where he described his alleged links with Mirchi as speculative. "There are speculative views and documents

which may have been leaked to media. Obviously, you are in possession of some papers which may have never been brought to my attention," he said according to ANI. He also said he was not in charge of the property and that everything is now with the receiver of the Bombay high court. "At this stage everything is with court receiver of the high court. We are nowhere directly looking after the property and neither are we directly in charge of it," Patel said. Patel, who was the aviation

minister during the United Progressive Alliance regime, had earlier rubbished reports of his links with Mirchi, saying there was "not an iota of truth" in the allegations. Iqbal Mirchi, whose real name was Muhammad Iqbal Memon, was the right hand man of Dawood Ibrahim and was wanted for the 1993 Mumbai blasts. He died in the UK in August 2013 at the age of 63. He was also one of the world's top drug barons before shifted his attention to betting in cricket in his last years.

How the Saras aircraft will be a game-changer

The latest advancements will strengthen regional passenger connectivity, and add to India's growth story



(News Agencies) The first-ever indigenous light passenger aircraft Saras is all set to soar the skies, and will prove to be a game-changer in domestic civil aviation. With the fillip to domestic manufacturing by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, the 19-seater Saras Mk2 project led by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) is slated to be one of the biggest achievements under the Make In India mission.

In just four more years, Saras Mk2 will obtain final certification. Their induction into the Indian Air Force (IAF) will begin from 2024. It is encouraging that the IAF has already committed to the induction of 15 such aircraft for various applications such as troop movement, VIP transport and supply roles

during emergency situations. The in-house design and manufacturing of Saras Mk 2 are now attracting global attention. The reasons are the low acquisition and operating costs, high aircraft performance abilities and the latest generation technologies compared to any contemporary aircraft such as Dornier Do 228NG (Germany), N219 (Indonesia), Beechcraft 1900D (US), LET 410 NG (Czech Republic) and Harbin Y12F (China). The Saras project will pave the way for the knowledge generation, design and development of the 70-90 seat aircraft for regional passenger connectivity. The design studies of the next generation 70-90-seater regional transport aircraft are on, and the proposal is under examination by the ministry of civil aviation.

The Saras MK 2 project will, therefore, be a unique example of co-development, co-production under the Make in India initiative.

It is also attracting a lot of attention with the government having announced the ambitious UDAN scheme to facilitate and stimulate regional air connectivity at affordable fares to offer air travel to those who walk with 'hawai chappals', and decided to expedite efforts in the manufacturing of the indigenous light passenger aircraft. The first attempt to design and develop a multi-role transport aircraft began in 1999 after the green signal from then PM AB Vajpayee, and award of the prestigious project to the NAL, a constituent of the CSIR. The CSIR-NAL, without prior experience, designed and developed the first prototype of Saras.

Consequently, the first successful maiden flight took off on May 29, 2004, thus enabling India to join the elite club of five nations to manufacture the light passenger transport aircraft. After taking over as Union minister of science and technology, I visited NAL in 2015 and saw the manner in which the efforts of our scientific community were being wasted as the once-famous Saras prototype stood in the hangar waiting to be revived. I convened a meeting and exhorted our scientists and engineers to restart work on the project and not feel demoralised by what had happened.

The project was soon back on track. A team of 40 young enthusiastic scientists, under the leadership of JJ Jadhav, director, CSIR-NAL, worked round-the-clock to effect various modifications on their first Saras prototype aircraft (PT1) and to overcome the deficiencies during the earlier flight testing. The modified Saras took to the skies once again in a period of 14 months on January 24, 2018. The modified version of Saras has completed 23 flights. The Saras project will go a long way towards meeting the aspirations of the government that intends to improve rural air connectivity between tier-two and tier-three cities.

The contrast in the BJP and Congress campaigns

Both Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi return to familiar themes for the polls



(News Agencies) On Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi kicked off their campaigns in Maharashtra. They followed it up with rallies in Haryana on Monday. Both have started their public outreach in completely different circumstances in the two states. In Maharashtra, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in pole position. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has established himself as a skilled political manager. Its alliance with the Shiv Sena is in place. And the alliance looks set to return to power. The Congress is facing a deep crisis. It has crumbled in traditional strongholds. Many leaders have quit the party. Its social alliance has frayed. And it is not clear if the party will even manage to come third or be overshadowed by the Nationalist Congress Party. In Haryana, the BJP's Manohar Lal Khattar is the clear favourite, while the Congress has just about resolved its internal factional feuds to be able to get battle ready. Mr Modi, thus, spoke from a position of supreme confidence. He stuck to two

themes that paid rich dividends in the Lok Sabha elections. The first was welfare and the central and state government's delivery of services — electricity, toilets, gas connections — on the ground. The second was nationalism, with Kashmir as a key issue. Mr Modi dared the Opposition to reverse the move on Article 370, and promised normalcy in the state soon. If there was one element missing in the messaging, it was addressing the concerns on the economy. The government has indeed taken corrective steps but it needs to do more to revive sentiment. Hearing the PM on the road ahead would have been useful. Mr Gandhi stuck to two themes that had marked his Lok Sabha campaign too. The first was the economy, where he spoke about rising unemployment, the slowdown in growth, and bank fraud. The second was Rafale, where he reiterated the allegations of corruption against the government. While the first theme is significant and has potential resonance, the second was surprising, for it is clear that Rafale had little traction in the national polls.

'Cut rates, reform more to revive economy': IMF tells India

IMF on Tuesday slashed India's growth projection to 6.1% for the current fiscal from its July forecast of 7%.

(News Agencies) India should opt for further monetary policy easing and broad-based structural reforms to reverse a cyclical demand slowdown, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday while slashing its growth projection for the country to 6.1% for the current fiscal from its July forecast of 7%.

"In India, growth softened in 2019 as corporate and environmental regulatory uncertainty, together with concerns about the health of the non-bank financial sector, weighed on demand," IMF said in its biannual World Economic Outlook (WEO).

IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath told reporters that the government has taken

appropriate steps but it needs to do a lot more, including cleaning up the balance sheets of commercial banks, to ward off the negative impact on growth from financial vulnerabilities. "On the fiscal side, there have been some recent measures including the corporate tax cut. There has been no announcement on how that will be offset through revenues at this point. So, the revenue projections going forward look optimistic. But it is important for India to keep the fiscal deficit in check," she added. Gopinath, in her initial statement, said the global economy is in a synchronised slowdown and that IMF is downgrading growth for 2019 to 3%, the slowest pace since the 2008 financial crisis. "Growth

continues to be weakened by rising trade barriers and increasing geopolitical tensions. We estimate that the US-China trade tensions will cumulatively reduce the level of global GDP by 0.8% by 2020. Growth is also being weighed down by country-specific factors in several emerging market economies, and structural forces such as low productivity growth and ageing demographics in advanced economies," she said.

The Indian economy is battling a severe demand slowdown and liquidity crunch that have resulted in economic growth slowing to 5% in the three months ended June, while growth in private consumption expenditure slumped to an 18-quarter low of 3.1%.

India's industrial output contracted 1.1% in August, its worst show in 81 months, signalling a further deepening of the economic downturn.

The multilateral agency said India's economy decelerated in the June quarter, held back by sector-specific weaknesses in the automobile sector and real estate as well as lingering uncertainty about the health of non-banking financial companies.

IMF joins a parade of multilateral institutions, rating firms and brokerages in cutting economic growth estimates for India, after Asia's third-largest economy grew at the slowest pace in six years in the June quarter. The World Bank on Sunday slashed its economic

growth forecast for India to 6% citing a broad-based and severe cyclical slowdown. Last week, Moody's Investors Service lowered its 2019-20 growth forecast for India to 5.8% from 6.2% earlier, saying the economy was experiencing a pronounced slowdown partly due to long-lasting factors.

The rating agency's projection is the most pessimistic so far. The WEO report said growth in India will be supported by the lagged effects of monetary policy easing, a reduction in corporate income tax rates, recent measures to address corporate and environmental regulatory uncertainty and government programmes to support rural consumption.

Union minister Ashwini Choubey comes under ink attack in Patna, faces protest over anti-dengue steps



(News Agencies) A man said to a supporter of former MP Pappu Yadav threw ink at Union minister of state for health, Ashwini Kumar Choubey outside the Patna Medical College and Hospital on Tuesday morning where he had gone to review measures to fight dengue cases in the city, police said.

The youth, who later identified himself as Nishant Jha, claimed to be an office-bearer of the students' wing of Papu Yadav's Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) student's wing. Yadav, however, denied that the youth was in his party, but justified his action. Choubey was about to board his vehicle after meeting patients and holding discussions with doctors and hospital officials when the young man carrying a plastic bottle, flung ink at him which landed on his half-sleeve jacket and hand and smeared the vehicle's bonnet and a window pane. Two persons one of them wearing a blue T-shirt and black jeans ran away from the scene and although

security personnel chased them they could not be caught. While the minister was in the hospital, supporters of JAP raised slogan in protest against the government's alleged apathy in providing relief to Patna's residents affected by waterlogging and its failure in providing proper medical facilities after the outbreak of vector-borne

While the minister was in the hospital, supporters of JAP raised slogan in protest against the government's alleged apathy in providing relief to Patna's residents affected by waterlogging and its failure in providing proper medical facilities after the outbreak of vector-borne diseases.

diseases. A visibly perturbed Choubey later told journalists at the spot "that it is the handiwork of those who used to indulge in crime before entering politics." Choubey had initially tried to deflect the ink attack on mediapersons, saying two journalists, who were in the front, took the brunt of the attack while a few drops of ink fell on him as he was in the background. "In democracy, such an act is considered as one of cowardice. Those who

have been doing politics of crime now want to become big leaders. I am sorry, but such elements should not be encouraged by giving them prominence. Such people harbour hopes of joining big political parties," said Choubey in an oblique reference to Pappu Yadav. "This was a breach of security and police should thoroughly investigate the matter and book the culprit," he said.

The man who allegedly threw the ink later spoke to local TV news

channels and said he "wanted to vent his anger on behalf of the common people whose voice those in power never listen to." He also denied that he got any instruction from his party to throw ink. "It was my personal grudge after the death in a family due to dengue. I was opposing the government for quite some time but nobody was listening to common man's plight," he said. Pappu Yadav denied any link to the man who threw the ink and said

there is palpable anger against those in power. "The incident should not be linked to me or my party. It is public outrage that has spilled over," said Yadav. Dengue cases in Bihar have so far crossed 1757 this year of which 1273 were reported from Patna till October 14. Dengue has spiked in the state capital after rain between September 27 and 29 triggered a fortnight-long waterlogging in various parts of Patna.

In BJP manifesto for Maharashtra, Bharat Ratna for Vinayak Damodar Savarkar

The Bharatiya Janata Party's national working president JP Nadda released manifesto at an auditorium in Bandra. Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, the BJP's state unit president Chandrakant Patil, and Mumbai unit chief Mangal Prabhat Lodha were present at the release.

(News Agencies) The BJP on Tuesday promised to make Maharashtra free of drought and said it will provide one crore jobs, homes to homeless families, compulsory health tests for those turning 30 and internet connectivity in every home among others in its manifesto for the October 21 assembly polls. In another grand poll promise, the BJP manifesto said it will try to get Bharat Ratna for Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and also one for Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule. The Bharatiya Janata

Party's national working president JP Nadda released manifesto at an auditorium in Bandra just five days ahead of the assembly polls. Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, the BJP's state unit president Chandrakant Patil, and Mumbai unit chief Mangal Prabhat Lodha were present at the release.

"A list of 16 broad issues gives the gist of the entire manifesto. It is a very well-studied and serious document," JP Nadda said. "It is an all-inclusive and progressive manifesto," Fadnavis said. The BJP has promised a

drought-free Maharashtra in the next five years if it returns to power and said it will work towards it by connecting 11 dams under the Maratha water grid project and diverting the waters of the Krishna River to drought-hit areas.

The ruling party's poll document also promised solar power for more than 12 hours during the day time in all villages to run farm machinery.

Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis also promised to connect one crore families to self-help groups (SHGs) with the focus on creating



employment for women and safe drinking water for all households as part of his party's manifesto. Screening for diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiac diseases, eye check-ups and blood pressure at the age of 30 for all citizens was another area of focus in the manifesto.

The neglected 'Bihari' community in Bangladesh

While the international community is focused on the plight of Rohingya refugees, not many in the world are aware of the ordeal of Bihari Muslims who migrated from India in 1947.



(News Agencies) In Bangladesh, a "Bihari" is a common term used for a non-Bengali Muslim who originally belongs to India's eastern state, Bihar. In 1947, India was divided and Pakistan, a Muslim-majority nation, was created. During the partition, marked by violent communal clashes, many Muslims from Bihar left for East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. In 1971 however, Bangladesh gained independence after a bloody war with Islamabad that was triggered mainly by language and ethnicity issues. Many Urdu-speaking

Biharis, who largely maintained a pro-Pakistani stance during the 1971 war, failed to make their way to Pakistan. Their support for Islamabad caused Bangladeshis to be distrustful of them and consequently, Dhaka did not take any steps to accommodate Biharis into its society. As a result, hundreds of thousands of members of the community have been stranded in Bangladesh for several decades, sequestered in camps and lacking basic rights. According to local NGOs working for Bihari welfare, around 400,000 members of the community

live in camps in Bangladesh. Recent data released by the government of Bangladesh revealed that most Biharis are currently housed in 116 camps in the country's 13 different districts. Of these, the capital Dhaka hosts 100,000 Biharis in 45 settlements. Houses inside these settlements are separated by a narrow passage hardly one meter wide and often occupied by domestic cattle. Families are cramped into tiny rooms, with little or no privacy for members. Rainy spells often lead to overflowing toilets and flooded paths, and lack of water and poor sanitation make life even more difficult. Additionally, Biharis are often uneducated and unable to find skilled jobs. "You will not find any Biharis employed in higher positions at government offices because they are not qualified enough," Khalid Hossain, Chief

Executive of the Council of Minorities in Bangladesh told DW. Members of the community are therefore forced to earn their income working as barbers, butchers, rickshaw-pullers, transport workers or automobile mechanics. Children are also forced to work early because their parents have barely any financial means to educate them. After an order from the Supreme Court in 2008, the government in Dhaka allowed Biharis to be included in the national voters' list. This also enabled them to obtain documents proving their identity. However, most Biharis are not eligible for Bangladeshi passports because they live in temporary settlements and according to the rules, an applicant needs to provide a permanent address for getting a passport. "We have been leading an inhuman life, deprived of basic facilities for five

decades. Only 5 to 10 percent of us have access to formal education. We want to be able to fulfill our basic needs; we want to see our children going to school," president of the Urdu-speaking Rehabilitation Movement, Sadakat Khan Faku, told DW. Anti-Bangladeshi social stigma is a major concern for the Biharis. Many of them are paying for the previous generation's support for Pakistan during the 1971 war and are still labelled as being against Bangladesh. "We would like to get a chance to integrate into Bangladeshi society and not remain isolated in camps and bear the brunt of being anti-Bangladeshi," Khalid Hossain, a Muslim Bihari, told DW. He also suggested that the Bangladesh government introduce a quota system in educational institutions and in the public service sector so that his community could overcome

poverty and illiteracy. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government is mulling a plan to relocate Biharis living in its capital city Dhaka to a nearby area. According to the plan, the government would acquire one thousand acres of land to erect multi-storied buildings in order to house the community. The settlement would be handed over to members in return for a monthly or yearly financial installment. The plan is in its primary phase and the government is carrying out a feasibility study to assess the extent of its implementation, Shamima Nargis, member of the Physical Infrastructure Division of Bangladesh's Planning Commission told DW. But Biharis are concerned that the plan would again separate them from society. "Biharis want to be relocated with an opportunity to integrate into the society they live in, not to be shut inside camps," Khalid Hossain said.



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Prince William and Kate Middleton whizz to Pakistan reception in colourful tuk tuk



(News Agencies) The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge travelled in style on the second day of their royal tour of Pakistan. The pair emerged from a colourful tuk tuk outside Islamabad's National Monument, as they attended a reception celebrating the Commonwealth country's relationship with the UK. Kate Middleton donned a glittering emerald dress designed by Jenny Packham while Prince

William wore a sherwani by Karachi-based designer Naushemian. The duke will speak at the event hosted by British High Commissioner for Pakistan Thomas Drew, where the pair will meet influential people from business, creative industries and Government. The couple's five day tour has been called the 'most complex' to date as they visited Pakistan amid political volatility and increased security

concerns. Pakistan is embroiled in a period of tension with its neighbour India over the disputed region of Kashmir. Skirmishes on the de-facto border between 'Indian-administered Kashmir' and 'Pakistan-administered Kashmir' have been on the rise, leading to both troop and civilian casualties. William and Kate are due to travel more than 1,000 km throughout Pakistan, visiting Islamabad, the city of

Lahore, the mountainous northern countryside and the border regions to the west. Precise details of their engagements will only be released day by day due to 'security considerations', the couple's communication secretary said. As they went to meet President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan earlier today, authorities deployed more than 1,000 police and paramilitary forces for their protection



and set up checkpoints raising 'awareness about and roadblocks in parts of mental health, climate the capital. Alvi said he change and poverty 'commended' the couple for alleviation'.

Breaking the begging bowl

Making the economy stand on its own feet to avoid going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) again and again for balance-of-payments support has been one of the elusive goals for most civilian and military governments.

Former premier Shaukat Aziz even claimed to have broken the begging bowl. This government also claims to have this laudable objective, but things appear to be moving in a different direction.

In absolute terms, the total public debt is officially projected to shoot up to Rs45.57 trillion by 2023-24 from Rs31.79tr at the end of 2018-19. With the anticipated expansion in the economy and import substitution initiatives in the offing, officials are optimistic that the total debt will come down from existing 80.4pc of GDP to 65.5pc over a five-year period. Meanwhile, debts rose to Rs32.24tr in two months at the end of August.

In the absence of any policy to

reduce heavy foreign dependence and without any serious move towards self-sufficiency, similar projections made in the past got nowhere. But now any space for Pakistan in international business is being squeezed by a feared global recession. That leaves Pakistan with no option but to finally stimulate its domestic market to spur diversified indigenous production. In a policy shift, the government is taking initiatives to reduce the economy's dependence on imports by boosting indigenous production. Addressing a news conference on the eve of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Beijing, Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar said highest-level talks would involve import substitution projects in the areas of hydropower, oil refinery and steel mills.

Initially, Pakistan will offer China 7,000-megawatt Bunji

hydropower project and bilateral cooperation for reviving Pakistan Steel and raising its capacity to three million tonnes per annum to help reduce imports of scrap and steel products worth \$2bn. Chinese assistance will also be sought for increasing the capacity of oil refineries to cut the oil import bill of \$14bn a year by \$1.5bn. However, the latest projection about the debt-to-GDP ratio coming down in five years has been made at a point when, to quote a report by the United Nations Trade and Development, the country is "in the midst of a crisis as the growth rate has halved, the balance of payments is in poor shape, the rupee has depreciated significantly and external debt is large and rising".

To quote from World Bank data, external loans soared to \$91bn in 2018 from \$86bn in 2017. These loans have been showing a rising trend since 2008. The ratio of external debt

stocks to export earnings was 295pc and that of debt servicing to exports was 20pc in 2018. The surge in debts is mainly because of the rupee depreciation, which had been undervalued by 7pc by August. In the first two months of 2019-20, the government borrowed \$1.62bn, including \$321.5m from commercial banks amounting to 20pc of the total loan. The situation at the end of more than a year of stabilisation efforts calls for a policy review.

However, much of the problem lies with a weak policymaking process as well as the PTI's style of governance. A cursory look at its governance mode shows that the PTI's confrontationist approach has made bureaucratic support less forthcoming. Corporate leaders reportedly told General Bajwa they did not see light at the end of the tunnel and things would continue to worsen if nothing was done on an emergency basis. They



complained that 90pc of the tax increase was collected from existing taxpayers and that was raising the cost of doing business.

Economic agents who keep the wheels of the economy moving are also allegedly being harassed by National Accountability Bureau officials lacking expertise or intricate knowledge of business activities. Some course correction is, however, underway. The Planning Commission recently said it had released Rs133bn for uplift projects that accounted for 19pc of the total annual development outlay of Rs701bn. The figure was just one percentage point short of the quarterly target, which was

usually missed by bigger margins in the past. This may stimulate some private investment. But the policymaking at the federal level suffers from major pulls and pressures. The country's finance team working on the IMF agenda is focused on fiscal and current account deficits. Then there is a prevailing perception that prosperity is a function of the balance in security needs and economic growth. How this blends with the PTI's concept of welfare state is not clear. The federal cabinet is reported to be divided on the issue of privatisation. Hopefully, the divergent positions will be reconciled sooner rather than later to move forward in an effective way.

The smiles say it all!

EU leaders AGREE Boris Johnson's Brexit deal after Jean-Claude Juncker said there will be NO extension beyond Oct 31st if MPs reject it - leaving Remainer rebels backed into a corner

Boris Johnson was triumphant in Brussels tonight as the EU agreed to his new Brexit deal - and Jean-Claude Juncker backed Remainers into a corner by suggesting that the bloc will not agree to any further delay.

The European commission chief turned up the heat by indicating no extension will be offered by the EU next week - a move that could checkmate pro-EU MPs by neutralising their law designed to block No Deal and force the PM to ask for a delay on Saturday - but hours later Donald Tusk refused to rule out EU leaders listening to a request for a delay. It means that if Remainer MPs refuse to back Boris Johnson's deal in a showdown vote on Saturday, they run the risk of Britain not being offered a delay and crashing out of the EU without a deal.

That sets up a day of frenetic deal-making tomorrow, with No 10 fighting to win onside former Tory rebels, the DUP and Labour rebels.

The dramatic intervention came as Mr Johnson insisted 'now is the moment to get Brexit done' after he signed off the blueprint, which deletes the hated Irish backstop. Mr Johnson has taken an extraordinary gamble by agreeing to the deal despite fierce opposition from the DUP - who publicly spelled out a laundry list of objections and accused him of risking the break-up of the UK, vowing to vote against the package.

Mr Johnson told reporters this evening he was 'very confident' that MPs will want to vote for his deal on Saturday.

He then suggested his view that there should be no further Brexit extension was 'widely shared' among other leaders.

The PM said: 'My view has been very clear for some time. I don't think delay is to the advantage of the UK or the whole of Europe. That is a view that seems to be quite widely shared.'

However, while the summit significantly avoided pointing to

any delay, it also fell short of categorically ruling one out if Mr Johnson loses his Commons vote. European Council president Donald Tusk said any request for a delay would be considered if it is made.

With no chance of an extension, anti-No Deal MPs would face huge pressure to give their support to Mr Johnson's agreement.

Mr Juncker earlier told reporters there will be no 'prolongation'. Asked if he believed Parliament would approve the deal, he said: 'I hope it will, I'm convinced it will. It has to. Anyway there will be no prolongation. We have concluded a deal and so there is not an argument for further delay - it has to be done now.'

The final decision on whether an extension would be offered ultimately rests with the EU heads of state.

Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, said this evening that 'if there is a request for an extension I will consult



member states to see how to react'.

But Mr Juncker's comments suggest that the EU does view Saturday's vote as the last chance saloon for an orderly Brexit.

Should Mr Johnson be defeated in the Commons he will then have to decide what to do next: Try to renegotiate an improved version of the deal or switch to calling for a No Deal Brexit.

If he does the latter, believing that the EU will not budge any further, then he will likely need to force an early election to deliver it.

Earlier today Mr Johnson hailed the unexpected breakthrough on a deal at a Brussels press conference alongside Mr Juncker with the PM saying there must

be 'no more delay' about the UK leaving the bloc.

'I do think this deal represents a very good deal for the EU and the UK,' Mr Johnson told reporters, saying the UK would leave 'whole and entire'. 'I think it is a reasonable, fair outcome and reflected the large amount of work undertaken by both sides.'

Mr Juncker added: 'This is a fair, a balanced agreement. It is testament to our commitment to finding solutions.' The new plan includes legal changes to Theresa May's original deal - something Brussels had previously insisted was impossible - with overhauled customs and regulatory arrangements specifically for Northern Ireland rather than the whole UK.

Shocking moment Italian post-grad students, 25 and 26, laugh and high-five each other after raping '10-out-of-10 drunk' woman



CCTV shows the shocking moment two wealthy Italian postgraduate students high-fived and hugged after raping a woman in the maintenance room of a London nightclub. Just six minutes after the 25-year-old woman met Ferdinando Orlando, 25, and Lorenzo Costanzo, 26, at the Toy Room Club under the London Palladium, they were having sex in the side room near the toilets.

Orlando is currently studying a postgraduate degree in international law and Costanzo is taking a

postgraduate masters degree in business and management. The pair were both unanimously convicted of two counts of rape today after a jury heard the woman was too drunk to consent to sex. Judge Giles Curtis-Raleigh warned the pair: 'Allegations of this type attract a significant sentence of imprisonment.'

The victim suffered serious injuries in the attack and needed 230mls of blood, the equivalent to a Coke can, drained from a haematoma.

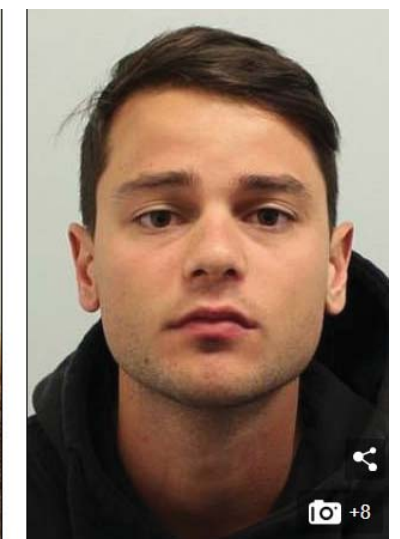
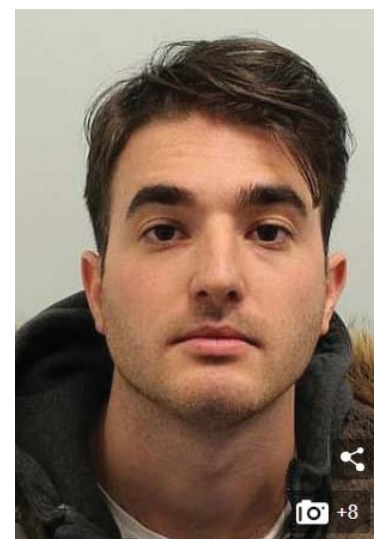
A doctor reported he had never seen the 'unusually severe

injury' in 2,000 similar examinations. Both students were represented by QCs over the course of three trials and it has been suggested their expensive defence team may have been funded by a wealthy family member in Italy.

Before the trial, the students' legal team made repeated applications to declare evidence inadmissible and even halt proceedings altogether.

Orlando's QC Sarah Elliott said: 'We can see her behaviour in the club, enjoying herself. She had obviously been drinking... she has no memory of the maintenance room.' Opening the case earlier this month, prosecutor Allison Hunter QC told Isleworth Crown Court that the nightclub's CCTV showed the two students and the victim meeting on the dancefloor.

She added: 'They can be seen to pass her from one to the other, each of them taking it in turns to kiss her.'



Orlando then led the woman to the maintenance room as she held on to his waist, with Costanzo behind, steering her as she leant into him

'I was in the middle of them so it was hard to get away from them,' the woman told the jury. 'They were the support for me walking.' All three emerged 16 minutes later, with the woman sandwiched between the defendants. The prosecutor said: 'Orlando can be seen to re-arrange her dress, which was twisted and raised at the front, to cover her modesty.

'The pair propel her towards the ladies' toilet, where they open the door and put her inside and turn and run down the corridor. 'They ran straight up the stairs to the outside, where they can be seen hugging, high-fiving each other, strong arming, laughing and looking at what appear to be images or videos on a mobile phone. 'They engage in gestures simulating sexual intercourse and oral intercourse and appear to laugh and congratulate each other.

Riches To Rags: How Billionaire Ranbaxy Brothers Malvinder And Shivinder Singh Landed In Jail

The Ranbaxy brothers -- Malvinder and Shivinder Singh -- systematically and deliberately siphoned off huge sums, estimated at Rs 10,000 crore. Most of the money was used to buy real estate

Of course, it is about money. But in the case of Malvinder and Shivinder Singh, the two Ranbaxy brothers and billionaire scions who ended up in jail, the narrative goes beyond a simplistic explanation. The sub-plots, which emerge larger than the main one, include personal tussles between family members—father--son and sibling rivalries—besides -intense friendships that led to -greater animosities. Add to this the mysterious veil of spiritual power—both the quest for it, and efforts to retain it.

The story spans three decades, starting when the two brothers were quite young, and their father, Parvinder Singh, and grandfather, Bhai Mohan Singh, were alive. It takes numerous twists and turns, curls and loops, and one can lose track of the critical markers along the journey. It comprises hundreds of dubious deals—money transfers from listed companies to shadowy private firms. Each transaction includes dozens of sub-deals so there is minimal connection between the points at which it originates and where it ends.

Even the mastermind, if there is only one, is difficult to pinpoint. Sometimes, the needle of suspicion points at Malvinder, the elder Singh, who took the key decisions. At other times, Shivinder appears to be the perpetrator, given his aggression and ambition. In some cases, Sunil 'Sunny' Godhwani, who handled the personal wealth of the two Singh brothers, looks guilty. The cast of characters also includes several faceless



bankers, senior corporate managers, company auditors and financial experts.

However, there is a big shadow lurking sometimes in the forefront, and sometimes in the background. This is the towering personality of Gurinder Singh Dhillon, the spiritual head of Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB), which boasts of more than four million followers across the world. Gurinder Singh's family members are allegedly active participants in the various firms involved in the fraudulent deals—wife Shabnam, and two sons, Gurpreet and Gurkeerat. RSSB forms a common link between the various actors.

The cases against the Ranbaxy brothers are simple to understand. They allegedly siphoned off huge sums—one estimate puts it at Rs 10,000 crore—from the listed groups such as Ranbaxy, Fortis and Religare.

They funnelled the money to their closely-held private firms. They retained a part of it, and shifted the

bulk of the funds to other firms that were owned by Sunil Godhwani, Gurinder Singh and Shabnam Dhillon, and Gurpreet and Gurkeerat Singh. Most of the money was used to buy real estate. The loot was systemic, deliberate, in connivance with the bankers, financiers, and auditors, and against the interests of the investors in the listed companies. It was done over 12-13 years. The money was squandered as the values of the properties fell sharply during the ongoing crisis in real estate. When the scandals became public, each actor blamed the others. Malvinder found faults with Shivinder, Godhwani and the Dhillons; Shivinder with Malvinder and Godhwani; the Dhillons with Godhwani; and Godhwani with the others.

"The notorious saga of Malvinder and Shivinder Singh seems to be at a conclusive stage and investigating agencies are tightening their grip on the pending cases," says Sandeep Grover, partner, Ortis Law Offices. "At the same

- 1999 Before Parvinder Singh dies at 56, he declares that D.S. Brar, a professional and his right-hand man, will run Ranbaxy; his sons, Malvinder and Shivinder, acquiesce despite a hue and cry by grandfather, Bhai Mohan
- 2004 Siblings oust Brar in a boardroom coup; Brian Tempest (pic), an old family friend, takes over, and Malvinder joins the board and bides his time
- 2006 Tempest out, Malvinder in; the latter charts out a new vision for Ranbaxy, reduces dependence on the US markets, and expands in Europe, Asia and Latin America
- 2006-07 The Ranbaxy brothers allegedly help Gurinder Singh Dhillon, spiritual head of Radha Soami Satsang Beas, his family members and Sunil Godhwani, the Satsang's funds manager, to make a killing through shares of Religare; the brothers sell 13.5 million shares at Rs 10 each before the IPO, though they were issued to the public at Rs 185
- 2008 Japan's Daiichi-Sankyo buys out the Singh brothers' stake in Ranbaxy for \$2 billion; Malvinder and Shivinder convert their assets into cash; Gurinder Singh convinces the brothers to sell out
- 2009 US FDA bans several Ranbaxy drugs, finds manufacturing deficiencies and data fraud; Daiichi

- kicks out the two Singh brothers
- 2009- 2012 The Singh brothers -expand in -hospitals (Fortis) and -finance (Religare); Godhwani handles their -personal wealth; Singhs take out money from Fortis and Religare to fund real -estate deals of firms owned by Dhillon, and his family
- 2013 In a US court, brothers plead guilty to the charge that Ranbaxy sold adulterated drugs, and agree to pay \$500 million; Daiichi sells Ranbaxy to Sun Pharma in 2014
- 2016-17 Singapore tribunal asks Ranbaxy brothers to pay Rs 3,500 crore to Daiichi as the former concealed -critical information during Ranbaxy's sale; later, Supreme Court upholds it; Religare alleges -siphoning off of Rs 740 crore, which is the case in which the brothers are arrested in 2019, and says the total exposure is Rs 2,200 crore; a New York-based investor in Religare files a court case that the brothers -indulged in "diversion and -siphoning" of \$1.3 billion; Godhwani exits Religare
- 2018 Malvinder and Shivinder resign from Fortis and Religare groups; SFO and corporate affairs ministry initiate -investigations into -financial irregularities; Daiichi charges that Ranbaxy brothers -siphoned off Rs 2,900 crore from Ranbaxy
- 2019 Malvinder and Shivinder in jail

time, in a case filed by Japan's Daiichi-Sankyo, which bought Ranbaxy in 2008, the Delhi High Court has asked the Singh brothers to reveal details of the assets transferred by them (from Ranbaxy, as alleged by the Japanese buyer)." The court has sought information from the other players like Gurinder Singh of RSSB.

The seeds of arrogance and ambition, which ultimately led to immense greed in the Ranbaxy family, were sown in 1991, when Parvinder took over the reins of business from his father, Bhai Mohan. The ambitious son expanded furiously, and established Ranbaxy Lab, a pharma

company, as a global player. Parvinder fought with his father, who wanted a veto power to influence board decisions, and two brothers, Analjit and Man-jit, who were unhappy with Bhai Mohan's division of the empire.

Before he died of cancer at 56 in 1999, Parvinder anointed a professional, and an intimate friend, D.S. Brar, as his successor. He said his two sons, Malvinder and Shivinder, should climb the Ranbaxy hierarchy until they gained enough experience to be given responsible positions. Bhai Mohan was angry, and lashed out publicly in favour of his grandsons. But Malvinder and Shivinder

acquiesced meekly to their late father's decision. Brar became the new Pharaoh of Pharma.

Hate, revenge and the urge to put their hands on the corporate wealth are said to have simmered inside Malvinder and Shivinder, even as they maintained stoic silence. Their chance came when Ranbaxy went through a painful phase of lower profits. In 2004, they connived to force Brar out, and inducted Brian Tempest, a professional close to them. Malvinder joined the board, and became president (pharmaceuticals). Now, the Singh brothers indirectly controlled the Ranbaxy operations.



Rumour had it that Tempest would keep the seat warm for Malvinder. In 2006, the latter took over and Shivinder joined the board. The family was back in power, but the brothers had a huge crisis on hand. At least during the early 2000s, or even before, the company's operations were carefully constructed on fraud, it has been alleged. Ranbaxy had emerged as one of the largest exporters of generic drugs to the US. But the nods it got from the American regulator to sell its products were based on cooked-up scientific data. By 2007, or even by 2006, the US FDA was on to the Indian company's antics. A whistle-blower, Dinesh Thakur, who left Ranbaxy in 2005, gave evidence to the American regulator. It was a matter of time before Ranbaxy was implicated. Malvinder and Shivinder initiated three strategies to manage the grim situation. They reduced Ranbaxy's reliance on the US market, and focussed more on Europe, Asia and Latin America. Within two years, America accounted for only a third of the company's exports. The two brothers sought ways to sell the company to a global player. In 2008, during the height of the global recession, Daiichi purchased the Singh family's stake for \$2 billion. It was a

corporate coup. The brothers had found the perfect way to tide over a global financial crisis. They had emerged as the Kings of Cash. Finally, to bolster their personal wealth, the Ranbaxy brothers, according to a complaint by the Japanese buyer, illegally transferred Rs 2,900 crore from Ranbaxy to their private concerns. By this time, the Singh siblings were close to RSSB, Gurinder Singh Dhillon and Godhwani. The RSSB-Singh family proximity was decades-old. According to members of the sect, when Babaji, as Gurinder Singh is popularly known, shifted to Beas from Spain in 1990 to take over as the new head, the situation was complex. He was inexperienced, and there were internal power struggles. Parvinder, father of Malvinder and Shivinder, became Dhillon's "biggest source of support". After Parvinder's death, his two sons, who were deprived of their legitimate corporate power because of Brar, sought refuge and solace at Babaji's feet. Sources contend it was the RSSB head, who cajoled them to sell Ranbaxy. Godhwani, a key member of the sect, became friends with the Singhs, or at least Shivinder, and emerged as their personal financial advisor. He helped them in moving the money out of Ranbaxy to personally

owned-companies, and take important investment decisions. The extent of proximity among these three families was evident in 2006. Malvinder and Shivinder transferred 13.5 million shares of a group firm, Religare Enterprises, to the two sons of Gurinder Singh, Gurpreet (6.25 million) and Gurkeerat (6.25 million), and Godhwani (1 million) at the face value of Rs 10 each. During the company's IPO in 2007, these shares were allotted to public shareholders at Rs 185. The combined paper profits of the trio: a whopping Rs 227.5 crore. Godhwani was the head of Religare. After the 2008 sale of Ranbaxy, three strands grew simultaneously. Publicly, the Singh siblings seemed like smart entrepreneurs, who judiciously used the \$2 billion from the Daiichi deal to grow their operations in hospitals (Fortis), and finance (Religare). They had huge ambitions—they wished to build the largest hospital chain in the country, and open a bank. They became the darlings of the media and shareholders. Corporate observers felt they could do no wrong. In private, away from prying eyes, the shenanigans continued. Massive amounts, raised as loans, were allegedly funnelled out of Religare and Fortis groups, and found their way to the private firms

owned by the Ranbaxy brothers, Godhwani, and Gurinder Singh and his family members. One estimate is that Rs 2,300-2,700 crore was looted to buy commercial properties in various cities, including in Saket, New Delhi. Shabnam Dhillon, wife of the RSSB guru, was a director in some of the largest recipients. Behind the scenes, the Ranbaxy's Japanese owner had smartened up to the frauds of the Singh brothers in the US market. Faced with investigations, and court cases in the US, Daiichi realised that it was duped. In 2013, the brothers admitted in a US court that they were guilty, and were fined \$500 million. In 2016, a Singapore tribunal asked them to pay Rs 3,500 crore to Daiichi because they had "concealed critical information" during the Ranbaxy sale. The Supreme Court of India upheld the decision. Despite such

setbacks, the swindling never stopped. In 2016-17, the RBI found that the Ranbaxy brothers gave "21 loans worth millions" to firms directly or indirectly linked to them. The Religare Group -alleged that Rs 2,200 crore was taken out by the two brothers. A New York-based investor, who held a 6 per cent stake in one of Religare's firms, said they indulged in "diversion and sip-hon-ing" of \$1.3 billion. The investigations began, and cases mounted, as various players scrambled for safety exits. Malvinder, who claimed he got a death threat, said Shivinder, who wished to be RSSB's next spiritual head, "bribed" the Dhillons. This was done by the transfer of loans raised by the three listed groups, Ranbaxy, Religare and Fortis, to the private firms owned by the Dhillons. Shivinder maintained that Godhwani had misused

his powers as the manager of the Singhs' personal wealth. The Dhillon family told the Delhi High Court that it had not received any money from the Singhs. "These are meaningless allegations," says a RSSB member. "There is no case of money laundering of the sect's funds. RSSB's money and assets are handled by a trust, and there can be no manipulation. Babaji's name is being dragged into corporate scandals masterminded by others such as Godhwani, who became quite close to the Singhs in 2011." Godhwani has largely been silent. The courts will decide the destinies of these characters. The fall of the Ranbaxy brothers is a classic case of how hubris, conceit, hunger for money and over-confidence can lead to a house of frauds. As quickly as it was built, it can fall -instantly like a house of cards.

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What we can do to tackle extreme weather events

(News Agencies) Buying a sea-facing flat in any coastal mega city in India may bring in challenges, warn climate scientists. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) special report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a changing climate made important revelations about the changing characteristics of the sea. It showed that the cryosphere — the frozen part of our planet — plays a critical role in sustaining life on earth. People around the world depend on these systems for basic sustenance. However, climate change is causing adverse consequences across these systems. The report warns that these changes will continue and some of them will accelerate in the near future.

The report warns that the global mean sea level is rising, with acceleration in recent decades due to increasing rates of ice loss from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, as well as continued glacier mass loss and ocean thermal expansion. The ocean is absorbing most of the carbon sink, making it much warmer than before. The impact of the warming ocean means that there will be an increase in the incidence of tropical cyclone winds and rainfall, increase in extreme waves, with relative sea level rise, exacerbate extreme sea level events and coastal hazards. The fish production is also expected to decline. While the sea level has risen globally around 15cm during the 20th century, it is currently rising more than twice as fast — 3.6

mm per year and accelerating. The sea level will continue to rise. It is projected to reach around 30-60cm by 2100 even if the greenhouse gas emissions are sharply reduced and global warming is limited to well below 2° Celsius. In the event of high greenhouse gas emissions, it will rise to 60-110 cm. Global warming has already reached 1°C above the pre-industrial level in 2017, due to past and current greenhouse gas emissions. There is overwhelming evidence that this is resulting in profound consequences for ecosystems and people. The ocean is warmer, more acidic and less productive. The world's ocean and cryosphere have been "taking the heat" from climate change for decades,

and consequences are expected to be widespread and severe. So, what does this information mean for India? India has the seventh longest coastline in Asia of 7,500km, stretching from the Arabian Sea in the west to Bay of Bengal in the east. The nine coastal states and two Union Territories have a population of about 560 million. In 2014, around 177 million people lived in coastal districts and 0.44 million lived in island territories in India which are considered to be at a greater risk. This includes mega cities such as Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata along with tier-2 cities such as Surat, Visakhapatnam and Goa. While events like cyclones will on the rise due

to warming oceans, salinity ingress will pollute freshwater bodies and will have huge impacts on water for irrigation and domestic use. The shifting rainfall patterns of the monsoon will also have bearing for people living on the coastal areas. The fish production will decline affecting millions who depend on fish production for their survival. In the last week of September, many parts of peninsular India, the coastal region and sub-Himalayan region received heavy downpour. Hyderabad and Patna have received rains unprecedented in recent history and they barely have the infrastructure to cope with it. The changes we are experiencing show us how vulnerable we are to a changing climate.

Will Pakistan get blacklisted or stay on grey list over terror funding? FATF takes final call today



Pakistan is under immense pressure as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) will take a decision on whether to retain the grey list designation for Islamabad or blacklist it alongside Iran and North Korea. The crucial decision will be announced by the terror watchdog on Friday. Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF, the global terror watchdog, in June last year and was given a plan of action to complete it by October 2019, or face the risk of being placed on the black list with Iran and North Korea. The FATF is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. Earlier, sources privy to the proceedings said Pakistan would remain on FATF grey list despite efforts of the country to muster votes to get off that list. "Pakistan in pre-plenary meetings was trying to achieve two things - to get off the

grey list and secondly, to block any move to be blacklisted," sources said.

What are the chances that Pakistan evades black list

Sources said Pakistan could avert being blacklisted where it needs three votes but may fail to get off the grey list since that requires 15 votes of support. Since China, Malaysia and Turkey are going to side with Pakistan, they have warded off the danger of black list which in other words is the 'FATF Public Statement'.

Even if Pakistan escapes the black list, it will not be completely off the hook until it proves it is genuinely severing ties with Islamist militants and take significant steps to fight terrorism.

Head of the Pakistani delegation, Minister for Economic Affairs Division Hammad Azhar, is slated to make his statement on Friday and a decision would be announced by FATF president Xiangmin Liu.

What it means for Pakistan

If blacklisted, Pakistan faces financial consequences and economic setbacks at a time when its economy is facing a balance of payment crisis. At the ongoing plenary of the FATF, chances are high that Pakistan will be retained on the 'grey list' as it has complied with just one of the 40 recommendations set by the global anti-money laundering watchdog at the time of its inclusion in the list. If Pakistan continues with the 'grey list', it will be difficult for the country to get financial aid from the IMF, the World Bank and the European Union, making its financial condition more precarious.

Watchdog's Asia Pacific Group critical report on Islamabad

Ahead of the current plenary, the watchdog's Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) issued a critical report on progress made by Islamabad since last year.

Of the 40 recommendations, the report said, Pakistan fully complied with only one, largely complied with nine, partially complied with 26, and totally missed four parameters, which were mandatory if Islamabad wanted to be removed from the grey list. It said Pakistan should adequately identify, assess and understand risks associated with militant groups operating in Pakistan such as Islamic State group, al-Qaeda, Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which continue to raise funds openly. Islamabad says it has seized the groups' assets, and put the militants on trials, like the entire

leadership of the JuD, including its chief Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks in 2008, which killed 166 people. "The main challenge for Pakistan is to convince the FATF that it is taking complete and irreversible steps against terrorist financing," Michael Kugelman, deputy director Asia Program at the Wilson Center thinktank, told Reuters by email. "My sense is that Pakistan has taken very real steps against terrorist financing, but so long as the state retains ties to militant groups, concerns

will remain within FATF about Islamabad's genuine commitment to act conclusively," the Wilson Center's Kugelman said. Pakistani author and analyst Ayesha Siddiqi said Pakistan was unlikely to completely abandon militant proxies any time soon. "I would start believing when JeM infrastructure gets downsized, its leader Masud Azhar is publicly arrested and put on trial," she told Reuters. "With Afghanistan still brewing, I don't think we are close to cleaning our house."

Man deported three years ago allegedly reentered the US and now stands accused of killing his girlfriend

On July 12, Olivo was found "severely decomposed" in the bedroom of their apartment after neighbors called authorities and complained of a foul odor on the floor, Clark said. She was stabbed twice in the neck, the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner said. Authorities believe Olivo was killed between June 13 and July 12. Severino Colon was taken into federal custody after his arraignment on state charges. His next court date is October 30. Lewis Mazzone, the lawyer representing him on the state charges, declined to comment this week. It's unclear if he has an attorney for his federal charge. During the state investigation, the New York Police Department informed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in late July that Severino Colon was

last seen in the Bronx and under investigation for a crime, federal court records show. Severino Colon was arraigned in Florida on August 14 on the federal charge of illegal re-entry. A judge directed US Marshals to transport him to the Southern District of New York. ICE lodged an immigration detainer with the NYPD after his arrest in August, ICE spokeswoman Rachael Yong Yow said in a statement to CNN. Severino Colon is a citizen of the Dominican Republic and has never been a United States citizen, federal court documents show. He was deported to the Dominican Republic on October 18, 2016, after pleading guilty to several crimes over an eight-year period, the federal complaint said. It is unclear when he returned to the United States.

Hunter Biden denies wrongdoing but regrets involvement in Ukraine 'swamp'

**Joe Biden's son admits to 'poor judgment' in taking Ukraine job
Hunter Biden breaks silence over foreign business dealings**

(News Agencies) Hunter Biden, the son of the former vice-president who is at the centre of the impeachment inquiry engulfing the White House, has admitted to "poor judgment" in taking a paid position in a Ukrainian gas company – but denied doing anything wrong. Breaking his silence over his business dealings in Ukraine and China that have become core to the investigation into whether Donald Trump tried to enlist the help of Ukraine in his re-election campaign, Biden told ABC News on Tuesday he had allowed himself to become involved in what he described as "a swamp". But he repeatedly denied ever discussing his foreign work with his father Joe Biden, a frontrunner in the Democratic race to challenge Trump next

year. "In retrospect I think there was poor judgment on my part," he said. "I know I did nothing wrong at all, but it was poor judgment to be in the middle of something that is a, it's a swamp in many ways." Later on Tuesday morning, Trump offered a review of Biden's performance. It was, he said, "really bad. Now Sleepy Joe has real problems!" Trump also attempted to tie the Biden affair to a scandal many think tipped the 2016 election his way. "Reminds me of Crooked Hillary and her 33,000 deleted Emails," the president wrote, "not recoverable!" Hunter Biden, 49, has largely kept out of the public eye since Trump and Rudy Giuliani, the hyperactive former New York mayor commonly described as the president's personal

attorney, began peddling a conspiracy theory that the Bidens acted corruptly in Ukraine. Trump used a 25 July phone conversation with the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to try to instigate an official investigation into Hunter Biden's business activities on the board of a major Ukrainian gas company called Burisma. According to the conspiracy theory, in 2016 Joe Biden, in his official role as vice-president, forced the firing of Ukraine's top prosecutor in order to stymie an investigation into Burisma and Hunter Biden's role within it. However, several top Ukrainian officials have made clear the investigation was dormant by that time and there is no evidence the younger Biden did anything illegal.

Hunter Biden told ABC coming under fire from Trump and Giuliani felt "like living in some kind of Alice in Wonderland where you are up in the real world and then you fall down the rabbit hole and the president is the Cheshire Cat asking you questions about crazy things that don't bear any resemblance to the reality of anything that has to do with me". The timing of Biden's interview has raised eyebrows, just hours before the fourth Democratic debate in Westerville, Ohio. Joe Biden will take the stage on Tuesday night at the centre of 12 Democratic candidates in the first such debate since the impeachment inquiry was launched last month. Several Democratic strategists have questioned the wisdom of Hunter speaking out at this critical moment. The



fear is that it might switch the focus away from Trump's efforts to enlist the help of the Ukraine government and on to the president's home ground: his unsubstantiated claims of corruption on the part of the Bidens. Hunter Biden also used the ABC interview to deny Trump's unfounded allegation that he made \$1.5bn from his work on a Chinese investment company. He said he had made "not one cent" from that relationship. "Look, this literally has no basis in fact," he said. Asked about a 2013 trip to China in which he accompanied his father on an official vice-presidential flight, he said he had gone to accompany Joe and his daughter Finnegan. He said he had not discussed any business matters at any point. The ABC interview is part of what appears to be a coordinated attempt by both Bidens to lance the boil of the Trump/Giuliani conspiracy theories. On Sunday Hunter announced he was stepping down from the board of the Chinese investment company. He also said he would desist from any foreign contracts were his father to win the presidency.

Father and six adult children who lived in Dutch farmhouse cellar for NINE YEARS waiting for the 'end of times' are discovered after one escapes and asks for help in nearby bar



(News Agencies) Dutch police have found a father and six 'adult children' living in the cellar of an isolated farmhouse waiting for the 'end of times'. Officials found a secret staircase behind a cupboard leading down to the basement after they were called to the secluded property in the village of Ruinerwold in the northern province of Drenthe. There they found a man lying in a bed and six adults aged between 16 and 25. Some of those freed 'had no idea that other people existed'. Local media said the family were found after a 25-year-old entered a nearby pub in a confused state on Sunday, drank five beers and then asked for help, saying he had not been outside for nine years. Police arrested a 58-year-old man at the scene for failing to cooperate with the investigation, but he was

not the father. Local news station RTV Drenthe, which first reported the story, said the family 'have been living in a basement for years, waiting for the 'end of times''. Drenthe police said: 'All scenarios are still open. Our research is in full swing and we cannot share more information at this time.' The location of the mother is unknown, but officials told RTV it's possible she's 'buried' on the farm. 'I have never come across anything like this before,' local mayor Roger de Groot told a press conference. 'Police investigated after receiving a tip-off from somebody who was concerned about the people's living conditions' and discovered the adults, de Groot said. 'They lived an isolated lifestyle,' he said, adding that they had been living on the homestead for the past nine years and several of the

children 'had not been taken up in the birthing register'.

The owner of the bar, Chris Westerbeek, told RTV Drenthe he had spoken to the 25-year-old man who told him he had 'run away and needed help. Then we called the police.'

He said the man, whose beard was 'dirty' and hair unkempt, said that he had been inside for nine years and that he wanted to end the way his family were living.

'He said he'd never been to school and seemed very confused. He spoke in a childish way,' said Westerbeek. He told him that his siblings were between the age of 16 and 25.

The man told Westerbeek that he 'needed help and wanted to put an end to the situation he was in,' according to Dutch newspaper Dagblad van het Noorden.

The 25-year-old added he had escaped at night because it 'was not possible during the day.' Westerbeek contacted the police who searched the farm and found a hidden staircase down to the cellar behind a cupboard in the living room. When police stepped downstairs they found a man laying in bed.

Initial reports said that the man was the father of the six adults however, according to Roger de Groot, mayor

of the village of Ruinerwold, the man the police discovered is not their father.

Though not their father, De Groot did say that the man did rent the property for the adults. The man was later arrested for failing to help police with their investigation.

The windows at the farmhouse had been boarded up and the family appeared to be living self-sufficiently with their own vegetable garden and animals. Police are still working to confirm the exact relationship between the adults.

Residents in the village said they 'always saw a man' who drove past the area daily. Nobody seemed to know the identity of the man, but

they gave him the nickname 'Joseph the Austrian'. 'You only had to get close to the yard and he already sent you away. He was watching everything with binoculars,' one resident told RTV Drenthe. One neighbour said they thought the father lived there alone. 'I really had no idea about this,' 'according to neighbour who lived a few hundred metres away.

'Anyway, this is the countryside. If someone does not want contact, then you accept that,' he added.

RTV Drenthe reported that the farmhouse was hidden from the main road by trees and the access road to the property crosses a bridge over a canal.



Deal with the devil

The terrifying tinder box Donald Trump has ignited as the Kurds are forced to seek help from their former foe Bashar al-Assad after the USA's 'betrayal'



(News Agencies) Last winter I was welcomed into the home of a Kurdish family who had fought alongside Britain and the US against Islamic State. Against the odds they had driven the barbaric fanatics from Kobane in northern Syria. The fighting was so brutal it was compared to the Second World War battle of Stalingrad. Yet now, with Turkish warplanes dominating the skies, they face a fresh siege and more bloodshed. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has designated Kobane as inside a 20-mile 'safe zone' for his war against Kurdish militia. The military offensive began six days ago following Donald Trump's decision to withdraw US troops from the border area. The Kurds have had to strike a 'deal with the devil' - asking their former foe, Syrian dictator Bashar Al Assad, to protect them. The family home I visited last year is now abandoned and my

hosts have fled, along with thousands of Kobane residents. The city has come under heavy Turkish shelling. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who were the US-led coalition's 'boots on the ground' during the fight against IS and who lost 11,000 fighters, say President Trump's move was a betrayal. In a shocking video shared online, a mother cradling her dying daughter after fleeing Kobane, cries: 'America sold us out to Turkey. They are murdering us and our children. Where are the rights of the Kurdish people? Aren't we human because we are Kurds speaking Kurdish? I have nowhere to go and nowhere to live. Where will I go if they steal my homeland Kobane? Why was Erdogan not doing anything while Islamic State was attacking Kobane and beheading our children?' Mustafa Al-Ali, who was born in the city,

expressed his fury at Washington and London for failing to intervene, despite still having special forces in the area. 'Turkey was shelling randomly and everybody was screaming and crying,' he added. 'People started heading to the US base. They wanted to be protected, everyone is trying to find a safe area. 'Kobane was the first city that defeated Islamic State. We lost so many people and now Turkey is shelling it and nobody is doing anything. The Kurdish people have been fighting IS to protect the UK and the US and we have been betrayed. Everyone is trying to find a safe area. If Turkey carries on there will be an ethnic genocide of the people of Kobane.' The assault forced the Kurds to make the pact with Assad on Sunday. Details of the agreement are unclear but it appeared to temporarily calm nerves despite Assad's regime having brutally suppressed the Kurds in the past. Residents in Kobane, which is described as the heart and soul of the Kurdish people, said they had been faced with a simple choice between the dictator or genocide at Turkey's hands. Kobane resident Said Mostafa Habbu said: 'The whole world stands against us, this is murder that is being committed against us. The whole world



sees what is happening and the [Western] coalition has a hand in it. 'They have been here for a long time, then they agreed among themselves and left us. The solution for us is the regime. We are part of Syria. I see no better than that now. Otherwise we would have faced a genocide like the Armenians.' Another resident, Farid Jumaa, said: 'If the regime came in now it would be very good. What can we do? We have to.' But not everyone was happy with the defensive pact. A former petroleum worker from the countryside near Kobane, who did not want to be named, said the Assad regime could not be trusted.

He added: 'For the Syrian Democratic Forces this is a deal with the devil. Assad would kill his people just to stay president.' The latest fighting in Syria began last Wednesday when Mr Erdogan launched Operation Peace Spring. He considers the US-

backed SDF to be a terrorist group that supports separatists in Turkey. Yesterday he said he believed his forces would easily take Kobane despite the arrival in the area of Russian-backed Syrian troops. 'It looks like Turkey's operation won't have any problems,' he said. Mr Erdogan promised he would keep up the fight against the Kurdish militia until 'ultimate victory' was secured. Turkey has the second largest army in Nato. The European Union issued its strongest statement yet yesterday, saying it condemned Turkey's 'military attack' on

Syria. It called on 'all member states to stop selling any kinds of arms' to Ankara. Meanwhile the escape of hundreds of jihadi brides from a camp in Syria has raised fears of terrorists returning to the UK. Tooba Gondal, an alleged IS recruiter, is among those thought to be on the run from the detention facility near Ain Assa. The site in north-east Syria was attacked by IS sleeper cells. Zara Iqbal, who has pleaded to return to Britain after travelling to the war zone with her sister Reema and their children from east London, was known to have been in the camp.



THE TERRIFYING TINDERBOX... ...IGNITED BY TRUMP

KEY

- Turkey** invaded after Trump's decision to withdraw US troops. It plans a 300-mile long, 20-mile deep 'safe zone' now held by Syrian Kurds, who it views as terrorists.
- Syrian Kurds** control 30% of Syria, having defeated Islamic State. They feel abandoned by the US - and have been forced to do 'a deal with the devil' and appeal for help from Assad's Syrian regime.
- Islamic State** fighters and families, who number more than 100,000, are in Kurd-run jails and camps. Some have escaped.
- The Syrian regime** of President Assad has entered Kurdish-controlled lands for the first time since 2012.
- Turkish-backed Syrian rebels**, such as the Syrian National Army, want regime change in Syria. They see an opportunity to reclaim land.

TURKEY

IRAQ

SYRIA

Labels on map: Aleppo, Manbij, Raqqa, Al Tabqah, Kobane, Tel Abyad, Ayn Issa, Ras al-Ayn, Tal-Tamir, Qamishli, Al-Hawl, Dayrik, Diyarbakir airbase, Euphrates river, Homs.

Labels on aircraft: AIM-120 air-to-air missile, Sidewinder missile, Turkish F16, RAFAEL Lazing targeting pod, Fuel tank, Paveway laser-guided bomb, D5000 cruise missile.

Labels on tank: Smoke rises from the Syrian town of Ras al-Ayn yesterday following a Turkish attack.

Female paedophile, 24, who told police a computer virus caused nearly 2,000 indecent images of children to be stored on her computer is spared jail



(News Agencies) A female paedophile who told detectives that a virus caused nearly 2,000 indecent images of children to be downloaded onto her computer has been spared jail. Jasmine Rowbottom, 24, was caught with the depraved images, many of which included children and examples of extreme

pornography, after her home in Dudley, West Midlands was raided by specialist officers in 2016. More than 50 pieces of computer equipment were examined revealing the sickening cache of images, which she denied any knowledge of. Rowbottom denied the offences and claimed the images must have been

caused by a virus on her computer or via a USB stick given to her years before. Following a trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court, Rowbottom was found guilty of making indecent images and possession of extreme pornography. On Monday she was handed a 21-



month prison sentence, placed on the sexual harm suspended for two years. prevention order for ten years and the sex offenders register for ten years. She was also given a two-year supervision order, was

17,000 sign petition demanding BBC removes from iPlayer its 'pleasure marriages'



(News Agencies) More than 17,000 people have demanded the BBC take down a documentary about young Iraqi girls being sold for sex - calling it 'disrespectful' to law-abiding Shia Muslims. The corporation broadcast 'Undercover With The Clerics - Iraq's Secret Sex Trade' on October 3 - an investigation into sexual exploitation of children and young women by clerics in Iraq. Journalists caught clerics offering 'pleasure marriages' to girls as young as nine - where men banned from sex outside

marriage can pay a dowry for an interim wife. The practice is banned in Iraq but eight out of 10 Shia clerics who were approached were willing to carry it out, the BBC World investigation found. But now more than 17,000 people have signed an e-petition demanding the BBC removes the show from iPlayer. The petition to the change.org petition - set up by 'Mo K' - accused the corporation of 'cherry-picking' [...] 'misguided men who do not represent Shia Islam in any way'.

But a BBC spokesman told MailOnline it won't be deleted and said: 'This thorough investigation was conducted over an 11-month period and exposes the sexual exploitation of children and young women. The documentary fully complies with BBC Editorial Guidelines.' The petition said the programme was made to 'tarnish the image of Iraq and Shias worldwide'. It claimed the women and girls in the show 'did not know that it was being used to belittle Shia Islam' and their words 'would be used against their faith'. The petition reads: 'To the BBC. When we asked for representation, we weren't expecting this mockery. 'The BBC have recently published a documentary titled 'Iraq's Secret Sex Trade', in which they go undercover to reveal the

heinous crimes committed by a number of men who claim to follow the Shia faith. 'Instead of making a documentary about the world's largest, peaceful, annual pilgrimage held in Iraq, hosting 20 million people each year; the BBC have decided to cherry-pick a handful of misguided men who do not represent Shia Islam in any way, shape or form to tarnish the image of Iraq and Shias worldwide. 'Please sign this petition if you stand with the Shia Muslims who feel that their religion is being gravely misunderstood. 'This is not just embarrassing, it is the utmost disrespect. 'To implicitly label us all as prostitution is an absolute disgrace. 'Those who partake in these

acts are not our desire.' Two of the three clerics secretly filmed by BBC Arabic describe themselves as followers of Ayatollah Sistani, one of the most senior figures in Shia Islam. However, in a statement to the BBC, as part of the show, the Ayatollah said: 'If these practices are happening in the way you are saying then we condemn them unreservedly. 'Temporary marriage is not allowed as a tool to sell sex in a way that belittles the dignity and humanity of women.' But thousands have slammed the BBC for allegedly tarnishing Islam 'on national television at prime time on Friday evenings' by signing the petition. The petition accused the programme of ignoring the 'world's largest, peaceful, annual pilgrimage held in Iraq, hosting 20 million people each year'.

Footage showed him explaining: 'It's up to you how you want to do it, she's permitted to you. You're allowed to perform from behind. Do what you

DEEPAK BANSAL
Office : 516-218-8000
Cell : 516-304-8808
Fax : 516-218-8009
Email : deepakbansalny@gmail.com
3498 Brodaway
Hicksville, NY 11801



What Maharashtra and Haryana reveal about Indian politics

This set of elections will once again show the robustness of India's electoral democracy. This is good news. But it will also expose the challenges that come with becoming an almost unipolar polity, where power is concentrated within a party

In a week from now, Maharashtra and Haryana will go to polls. Elections always throw up surprises. And it is best to wait for the outcome. But all the reports emerging from both states point to one common trend.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in power at the Centre and in both the states since 2014, is most likely to return to office. This could be in a coalition with the Shiv Sena (SS) in Maharashtra, and on its own in Haryana. The big question appears to be about the margin of victory. The elections may also, consequently, see the defeat of the Congress.

If this happens, what does it tell us about the underlying patterns of Indian politics?

The first conclusion is obvious. As Milan Vaishnav and Jamie Hintston of the Carnegie Endowment have argued, India is now witnessing the birth of the fourth party system. The first system was defined by Congress dominance (1952-67); the second was marked by growing opposition at the state level (1967-89); and the third saw the birth of coalition politics (1989-2014). And the fourth, since 2014, has been marked by the arrival of the BJP, under Narendra Modi, as the India's most politically powerful, organisationally dominant, and

ideologically hegemonic force. The 2019 victory showed 2014 was no mere aberration; the expansion of the party across states, social groups, and regions is now an established fact. Retaining power in Maharashtra and Haryana will once again reinforce the BJP's dominance. Two, it will show the power of the nationalism narrative, as projected by the BJP. As Rahul Verma of the Centre for Policy Research has argued, nationalism has been a theme in Indian politics, but its nature has changed. If the Congress of Jawaharlal Nehru focused on both the anti-colonial and the secular, civic form of nationalism, the Congress of Indira Gandhi began to make a slow shift towards a more muscular form of nationalism, with a dash of Hindu symbolism thrown in during her later years. The BJP has promoted a more Hindu-centric form of religious nationalism. This has both elements of anti-Pakistan and anti-minority rhetoric. The post-Uri surgical strike, the Balakot air strike, and now the moves on Kashmir fit into the former; the exclusion of Muslims from the political power structure fits into the latter. Irrespective of one's view on the desirability of this form of nationalism, it appears to have popular

resonance. The Opposition has not been able to counter this. As HT reported from Haryana last week, a voter in Panipat mentioned how he wished to vote for the Congress candidate — but would not do so because the party was “anti-national”. The image, fair or not, is getting entrenched and the party will have to be creative in breaking it. The third element is the steady expansion of the BJP among different caste groups that constitute the Hindu fold. In Haryana, the BJP, in 2014, focused on creating a coalition of non-Jat castes, resentful of Jat domination in politics. In Maharashtra, it created a substantial non-Maratha coalition, resentful of Maratha domination in politics. But in the upcoming 2019 election, while retaining its old caste groups, the BJP is aggressively wooing both Jats and Marathas too. It is also seeking to expand its presence among the Dalits, who constitute a substantial population segment in both states. If the BJP does succeed, it will once again show that the party is turning into an inclusive Hindu outfit — and that perhaps is a key reason for its success.

The fourth big message of this election is the evidence of dividends a party can reap in having both significant national

and state leaders. The BJP made two unusual choices in the two states — Devendra Fadnavis and Manohar Lal Khattar as chief ministers. Their rise was attributed to their close association with the Sangh and Modi's patronage. But Khattar, despite stumbling on law and order, has carved out an image of being honest in a political culture known for cronyism and corruption. Fadnavis has developed an image of an effective administrator and a shrewd politician who can take along different social groups and political actors. The BJP is perceived as a centralised party apparatus under Modi and Shah. This is undoubtedly true. But what is missed in this is that the central leadership has allowed local leaders to grow. The emergence of state leaders who now have developed capabilities of their own is a highlight of this election.

The fifth strand in this election is the state of the opposition, particularly the Congress. As Salman Khurshid admitted last week, the party has failed to introspect on the reasons for its loss in the 2019 polls. In a democratic polity, wins and losses are a part of the game. This is followed by a review, necessary corrections, and

revival. But Congress has not even got to the first step of understanding the root causes of its electoral debacle and steady erosion of strength. This has now trapped the party in a vicious cycle. It is out of power; it is ideologically incoherent; it has a weak national leadership; there is internal factionalism; its state leaders and workers are demotivated; and it has limited resources. All of this leads to election losses. And once the loss happens, the party gets further entrenched in the web of having even lower resources, further divisions, lower morale, a sense of fatalism about its fortunes, more confusion about the political line to pursue, and a greater exodus of leaders. Till this cycle is broken — either through a string of electoral successes or by getting the party machine back in order — it will remain stuck.

This set of elections will once again show the robustness of India's electoral democracy. This is good news. But it will also expose the challenges that come with becoming an almost unipolar polity, where power is concentrated within a party. Irrespective of where you stand on the political spectrum, this is worrying news for democracy.

Bernie Sanders is right, it's time to redistribute economic

His bold new plan is even more radical than the Labour party's. It would transform how companies operate and



Oligarchy rules the United States: the republic has been ransacked, its commonwealth privatised, and rentierism runs amok. The richest 10% of Americans capture an estimated 97% of all capital income – including capital gains, corporate dividends and interest payments. Since the financial crisis of 2008, almost half of all new income generated in the US has gone to the top 1%. The three wealthiest people in the US now own more wealth than the bottom 160 million Americans. And the richest family in America – the Walton family, which inherited about half of Walmart's stock – owns more wealth than the bottom 42% of the American people. The pundit class continues to misunderstand Bernie Sanders – and it shows. The case for bold action is clear and overwhelming. Only a deep reconstruction of economic and political rights can challenge oligarchic power and halt runaway environmental breakdown. Fortunately, Bernie Sanders has just announced a new plan that matches the scale of the crisis. His announcement on Monday of the corporate accountability and democracy plan is the latest and boldest proposal for economic democracy in America to emerge from the Democratic presidential race. At its core, it seeks to democratise the company by redistributing economic and political rights within the firm away from external shareholders and executive management toward the workforce as a collective. This is about redistributing wealth and income, but critically, it is also about redistributing power and control. Democratising the company would transform it from an engine of wealth extraction and oligarchic power toward a genuinely purposeful, egalitarian institution, one where workers would have a collective stake and say in how their company operates, and would share in the wealth they create together. The Sanders plan would transform and democratise economic and political rights by fundamentally rewiring ownership and control of corporate America. Companies would be required to share corporate wealth with their workers, transferring up to 20% of total stock over a decade to democratic employee ownership funds. The monopoly on voting rights that private external shareholders and their financial intermediaries have benefited from would be ended; employees would be guaranteed the right to vote on corporate decision-making at work, and have a voice in setting their pay, regardless of the kind or size of company or firm they work for. Corporate boards would be democratised, with at least 45% of the board of directors in any large corporation directly elected by the firm's workers. And the outrageous power of asset management – whose actions have done so much to accelerate the climate crisis by continuing to invest heavily in fossil fuel companies – would be ended. Asset managers would be banned from voting on other people's money – the collective savings of millions of ordinary workers – unless following clear instructions from the savers. Taken as a whole, Sanders's plan would radically re-engineer how the company is controlled and for whom. The echoes with Labour's agenda for democratising economic power is obvious, particularly John McDonnell's inclusive ownership fund proposal, and further evidence of an increasingly fertile transatlantic pollination of ideas and practice, from the Green New Deal to movement building. Common Wealth, the thinktank that I am the director of, is another example of this, committed to designing ownership models for the democratic economy on both sides of the Atlantic. In this, at least, there is much to learn from the right; Anglo-American conservatism and the new right have long shared intellectual and organisational resources and common aims, from the incubation of neoliberalism, to current salvations over a disaster capitalism-style US-UK trade deal. It is time progressives did the same. An emphasis on reimagining ownership and governance is a vital step forward. We face two deep crises – environmental breakdown and stark inequalities of status and reward – both sharing a common cause: the deep, undemocratic concentration of power in our economy. Working people lack a meaningful stake and a say in their firm. Corporate voting rights are near-monopolised by a web of extractive financial institutions. The needs of finance are privileged over the interests of labour and nature. Tinkering won't address this deep imbalance in power. To build an economy that is democratic and sustainable by design, we need to transform how the company operates and for whom. For the left, remaking corporations must be at the heart of a radical agenda. The company is an extraordinary social institution, an immense engine for coordinating production based on a complex web of relationships. The critical question is who controls how it operates and who has a claim on its surplus. Today, the answer is a combination of shareholders, institutional investors and executive management; the company has been captured by finance and extractive economic practices, but it doesn't have to be that way. The company – and the distribution of rights within it – are neither natural nor unchangeable. There is nothing inevitable about the existing, sharply unequal distributions of power and reward within them. The company is a social institution, its rights and privileges publicly defined. We can organise it differently: through social control, not private dominion, via democracy, not oligarchy. Sanders's announcement is an important step toward that democratisation, and the deeper economic reconstruction that both people and planet deserve.

If you are a woman in jail, don't bank on rules

The idea of open jails and more access to legal aid would go a long way to improving the lot of women in prisons. But for now, it would seem that system believes more in locking women up and throwing away the key

Every time a high-profile politician or businessman is sent to jail, stories start cascading about the poor conditions in jails, the denial of home-cooked food to the alleged offender, and his inability to meet as many visitors as he would like. The debates centre round whether or not the prisoner should get television sets, newspapers, pedestal fans and even attendants. All of this merits consideration, and indeed the conditions in our jails leave much to be desired. But within this, women prisoners are an overlooked sub-sect and, by all accounts, the penal system is far less kind to them than it is to men. The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative found that when there is overcrowding in smaller jails, women are forced to share space with men. Often, they are made to sleep on floors, without proper bedding even in the winter. The

Model Prison Manual provides for women doctors, superintendents, special care for pregnant and post-natal woman, and regular health checks. In most jails, this is not provided. Thanks to the lack of qualified prison personnel, male wardens and superintendents are often posted to the women's sections of jails, in gross violation of the law. Food rations are poor and in many jails women get much less than men. There seems no consistent policy to deal with women inmates across India. There is also lack of attention to women's health in jails. Constant fear and harassment, coupled with appalling sanitation and living conditions, cause mental stress and trauma. A study found that at least 1.2% of women inmates suffered from mental illnesses, which are rarely treated since there are hardly any mental health

experts available. Provisions for privacy, even proper bathing facilities, are not available in many jails. We hear success stories of how male prisoners are rehabilitated and taught vocational skills, but this is rarely so for women. When there is talk of prison reform, women's rights should feature prominently, but it hardly ever does. This is vital given that the female prison population in India has risen by 61% in the last 15 years as opposed to the male rate of 33%. Yet, infrastructure for women is inadequate and poor.

Children can only stay with women prisoners till the age of six. This means that the woman is often traumatised, wondering how her child or children are faring outside after they cross this age. Many women accused of various crimes do not have recourse to



legal aid; in fact, they know very little about their legal rights. Unlike in the case of men, who are often breadwinners, the woman prisoner tends to find little familial support. In many instances, the woman is housed in a jail far from home, making it almost impossible for her family to visit her even if they should want to. Many women in jail are there because they are far more vulnerable to police coercion, which makes them confess to crimes they may not even have committed.

Zombie debts are hounding struggling Americans. Will you be next?

Tens of thousands of people have received demands to repay alleged overpayments of government benefits – often decades old – plunging them into a Kafkaesque struggle against a faceless bureaucracy



This is what happens when the government targets you for zombie debt collection.

You receive a letter from your state's department of human services claiming that you were "overissued" \$4,132 in food stamp and cash benefits in the 1980s. Enclosed is a copy of the original overpayment notice they say they sent you when you were still listening to Madonna and Bobby Brown.

You don't remember ever seeing it before.

The letter informs you that, since you didn't respond immediately three decades ago, your 90-day window to request a fair hearing and contest the overpayment has closed. You now have a debt, and it's past due. The state threatens to refer this debt to the United States Department of Treasury, which has the power to withhold your federal tax return, your earned income tax credit, a portion of your military retirement pay—even your social security disability check. You are barely making ends meet, so the financial loss might mean doing without meals, a utilities shutoff, or skimping on medication. If they can't get the money from you, they will withhold your adult children's tax returns. You read this correctly: the federal government will take your children's money to resolve a 30-year-old alleged public benefits overpayment.

You have few options if you want to avoid this: you can pay the whole balance immediately, set up a monthly payment plan, or request an administrative review. But the process is impossibly Kafkaesque: you have to send evidence that you don't owe the debt, so you'll need to find three-decade-old pay stubs and household expense receipts. And who can do that?

If you're lucky, you'll eventually argue your case in front of an administrative law judge. But she'll work for the very agency that sent you the letter.

You have no right to free legal representation, so if you can't find a legal aid or pro bono lawyer, you're entirely on your own.

With quiet but devastating regularity, zombie debt notices are arriving at the homes of tens of thousands across the US – courtesy of the

government and with the assistance of heavyweight tech companies. The Guardian can reveal that predatory policy changes, turbocharged by digital innovations, are producing a wave of aggressive debt collection that stretches back decades and targets the nation's most vulnerable. Last year, Team 3335 found out about government zombie debt firsthand. The family calls themselves "Team 3335" because that's the address of the brick-faced single-family home in Steger, Illinois, that shelters three generations: 50-year-old Star Kaminski, her three children and the family's matriarch, 72-year-old Dreama Richardson.

When Dreama began to need more help with day-to-day chores, she and her daughter bought this modest place together, not far away from the public middle school where Star works as a librarian. It's a little crowded, but Star sees that as a gift, not a sacrifice. She likes her family near; they meet life's joys and challenges together.

Before the letter came, they were doing pretty well.

Then, last September, the Illinois department of human services, or IDHS, sent Dreama a letter claiming she had been overpaid \$2,500 in cash assistance and \$1,632 in food stamp benefits over a period of 10 months – in 1988 and 1989.

The agency alleged that Dreama failed to report teenaged Star's income from a part-time job at Taco Bell, which pushed the household's income over the earning cap for public assistance, making them ineligible.

Every 10 years or so since then, Dreama lost a tax return to service the "debt", but she hadn't heard from IDHS since 2007. Now, the state was looking to recoup the final \$1,323 they said the family owed.

The household had 60 days to pay up, or they would withhold a portion of Dreama's social security check – her only source of income – until the alleged overpayment was satisfied.

There was, however, a problem: in 1988 and 1989, Star wasn't living with her mom or contributing financially to her household.

The "overpayment" was

miscalculated. It was never a legitimate debt.

In the private market, a zombie debt is a debt that is past its statute of limitations, not owed, paid in full, or otherwise contested, yet which has found its way into the hands of a collection agency intent on pursuing payment by any means necessary. Those agencies are known to harass, threaten and trick consumers into paying out-of-date private debts, which they buy for pennies on the dollar. In 1977, the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act was passed to protect people against the aggressive tactics collection agencies use – calling at all hours, contacting employers, deception, publishing debtors' names – and to require that creditors prove that a debt is actually owed.

Unfortunately for Team 3335, the "overpayment" they're battling is government debt; they enjoy none of these protections. If private zombie debt is surprisingly easy to kill – asking a collection agency for proof the debt exists can often make it vanish forever – government zombie debt is just the opposite, rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the most difficult times in people's lives, over and over again.

When Dreama received the letter in September 2018, she almost agreed to pay. In her 70s, beginning to suffer from memory problems, and on a fixed income, the notice frightened and confused her. "I didn't understand," she told me. "They explained it to me, but I still didn't understand. How do you argue with the government? How do you prove something from 30 years ago?"

Written in her spidery handwriting in the margins of the September 2018 invoice for \$1,323.18 is a repayment plan suggested by an IDHS representative: "Due 15th of month," it reads, "\$25.00."

Before she wrote her first check, one of Star's daughters found a handful of articles written by Mark Brown for the Chicago Sun-Times describing other women in their 70s and 80s receiving notices about long-overdue public assistance overpayments. Star contacted a Chicago not-for-profit that agreed to provide the family

free legal aid. With their support, Dreama filed an appeal against the 1989 household composition error that created the overpayment "debt". Dreama's attorney submitted a number of documents supporting her case, including a signed affidavit from Star's ex-husband attesting that she was not living with her mother when she was working for Taco Bell. The Illinois department of human services sent a casework manager to testify, but submitted no evidence.

The hearing officer found for the state. Hearing officer Sheila King wrote in her decision that because Team 3335 filed their challenge more than 90 days after the "mailing of the first notice of the department's action" back in 1989, "the Bureau of Hearings does not have jurisdiction". She dismissed the appeal, allowing federal debt collection to move forward.

If Dreama paid for a vacation with a credit card and then refused to pay, the credit card company would have to sue in order to collect. They would have to serve her with a summons and provide proof that she had received it – they couldn't just mail a notice and assume it found its way into her hands. She could demand proof that the debt actually existed and ask to see a record of any payments already made. In Illinois, the credit card company would have 10 years to file a lawsuit to collect the debt, one of the longest statutes of limitations in the country.

one of these protections applies to Dreama's alleged public benefits overpayment. There is no proof she ever received the 1989 notice. The state offered no evidence that her "debt" was correctly calculated. They insist they can go on trying to collect it forever.

To Star, it feels less like lawful debt collection and more like intimidation. "You don't have the means to defend yourself," she said. "They're big bullies."

It is unclear if a legal mechanism for gamishing Dreama's social security checks actually exists. But Team 3335 is still nervous. "We worry about how mom is going to do

without her money," says Star. "If she wasn't living with me, I don't know where she'd be. Without one of us, the whole deck of cards falls."

"It's robbery," she says, "from our most vulnerable people – our seniors. And it's just not right."

Team 3335 is not alone. According to data obtained from the Illinois department of human services through an open records request, the agency sends out an average of 23,000 of these pre-offset notices every year.

Though the department denied in 2016 that there's been any recent push to collect old debts, attempts to recoup are clearly increasing. In 2010, IDHS sent out 7,669 notices that they were referring overpayments to Treasury. In 2017, they sent 32,881.

Back in 1996, sweeping changes to the public assistance system shifted how the government views administrative error. Two new acts included provisions that redefined overpayments of any kind – whether due to agency mistakes, client error or fraudulent misrepresentation – as debt.

The acts expanded state agencies' power to collect overpayments from future benefits, unemployment compensation and federal pay, pensions or income tax refunds. They also created new collection programs, including the Treasury Offset Program, or Top.

The process got a boost when, in the summer of 2008, the Farm Bill lifted the 10-year limit on collecting overpayments. That year, Top collected \$3.3bn in federal non-tax debts, more than three and a half times the amount they collected a decade earlier.

And then, in December 2010, the Claims Resolution Act passed. This historic piece of legislation settled an unresolved court case in favor of 75,000 black farmers unjustly denied agricultural loans in the 1980s and 1990s. Ironically, tucked into its 801st section was a provision to increase the "collection of past-due, legally enforceable state debts". It quietly expanded which debts could be referred to Treasury, from only those due to fraud to those resulting from unintentional errors.

WeWork set to sack 2,000 staff as anger towards founder Adam Neumann grows

Troubled office rental company to lay off 13% of its workforce to try to staunch massive losses – and few believe the cuts will stop there



(News Agencies) WeWork the troubled office rental company turn on its co-founder Adam Neumann. 2,000 people as soon as this week, as angry staff at WeWork rents buildings

long-term, gives them a millennial makeover with beer taps, communal spaces and tiny workspaces, and then rents them out short-term. Until recently it was America's most highly valued private company with 527,000 tenants, or "members", as WeWork calls them, worldwide. Two thousand jobs is about 13% of WeWork's 15,000 staff and few inside the company believe the cuts will stop there. WeWork declined to

comment. The cuts come after WeWork was forced to pull its share sale and new management moves to staunch the company's huge losses. Internally, staff say little or no work is getting done as workers prepare for the layoffs and new projects are put on hold. But the timing of the sackings is uncertain, not least because WeWork is now in active discussions to raise money before it runs out of cash next year. After years of breakneck growth, new openings have all but stopped in WeWork's two largest markets, New York and London, as landlords worry the company's future. The company's \$850m deal to buy the landmark Lord & Taylor department store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan is in trouble. And two large landlords in London, where WeWork has leased about 3.7m sq ft since 2014, recently told the Financial Times they would not sign new leases for the foreseeable future. One worker, who spoke anonymously for fear of reprisals, said: "The atmosphere is toxic. A lot of people worked so hard for this company. We thought we were in on something really big." In online chats on WeWork's Slack channel, obtained by the Guardian, staff shared memes about Adam Neumann, WeWork's co-founder and the man many blame for the company's dramatic fall from grace.

Just 500 people own 36% of all the equity in Thailand's firms

Thailand's private sector is dominated by tycoons at the helm of sprawling conglomerates. The gap between the well-off and the rest in a population of 69 million is among the challenges for the economy, according to the World

(News Agencies) About 36% of Thailand's corporate equity is concentrated in the hands of just 500 people, highlighting wealth inequality in the country, a study released by the Bank of Thailand's research institute shows. Each of these 500 on average amasses 3.1 billion baht (\$102 million) in company profits annually, according to the report from the Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research. In contrast, average yearly household income is about \$10,000. Thailand's private sector is dominated by tycoons at the helm of sprawling conglomerates. The gap between the well-off and the rest in a population

of 69 million is among the challenges for the economy, according to the



Word Bank. "Magnates arise in Thailand from institutional factors that privilege certain businesses," Krislert Samphantharak, the author of the study and the executive director of the Puey Ungphakorn institute, said in an interview. The institute said Thailand needs to

promote competitiveness to reduce profits from monopoly power, and bolster entrepreneurship to help create a more equitable distribution of corporate wealth. The research is based on an analysis of Commerce Ministry data on the 2.1 million shareholders in Thai firms in 2017. Krislert said the study was funded by the University of California San Diego, where he is an associate professor at the

School of Global Policy & Strategy. The Thai government is trying to tackle inequality by boosting welfare handouts for the least well off. But the perception of a growing divide exacerbated by an economic slowdown is one of the nation's biggest political fault-lines.

PMC bank's Joy Thomas is also Junaid Khan, owner of 10 Pune



(News Agencies) The Economic Offenses Wing of Mumbai police have been able to link Joy Thomas, the suspended managing director of Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) bank fraud to 10 properties bought over the last seven years, a senior police officer has claimed. The officer said Joy Thomas had acquired these properties after he changed his name to Junaid Khan, the alias that he had acquired to marry his one-time personal assistant. It was in this name that Junaid and his second wife appear to have bought 10 properties. Most of these assets - co-owned by the couple - were bought after 2012. This is around the same time that the first set of irregularities in the PMC bank's loan fraud, which blew up last month, have been noticed. The EOW have, however, not been able to establish if there is a link between the 10 properties and the fraud yet.

Paytm Close To Scoring \$2 Billion From Backers Including Jack Ma's

Paytm has in a decade become India's biggest digital-payments brand, attracting big names in investing from Ma and SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son to Warren Buffett.

(News Agencies) Indian fintech giant Paytm is close to scoring \$2 billion of new financing from investors including Jack Ma's Ant Financial, Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. and Rob Citrone's Discovery Capital Management to fend off an influx of new rivals, a person familiar with the matter said. The funding will be split evenly between equity and debt and values the country's top online financial services firm at \$16 billion, the person said, asking not to be identified

talking about a private deal. The talks are in their final stages but the terms could still change, the person added. If a deal is finalized, Paytm could outstrip fellow high-profile Asian startups such as Grab and Gojek in valuation. Billionaire Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma is raising capital to protect the startup's share of a potentially \$1 trillion Indian payments market from new entrants including Facebook Inc., Alphabet Inc.'s Google and Walmart Inc.-owned Flipkart's PhonePe. Over the

past year, a string of new apps have made payments increasingly easy, bringing discounts and cash bonuses to young, smartphone-savvy users. Credit Suisse Group AG now estimates that the Indian digital payments market will touch \$1 trillion by 2023 from about \$200 billion currently. It's a market with huge potential: Cash still accounts for 70% of all Indian transactions by value, according to Credit Suisse, and neighboring China is far more advanced with a mobile payments market worth more

than \$5 trillion. "India is a large market," said Kunal Pande, head of financial services risk consulting at KPMG. "Digital payments adoption is growing quickly, yet there is room for massive growth as users get comfortable transacting digitally. The large business opportunity makes it attractive for both domestic startups and large global players."

Paytm, which is also backed by Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., declined to comment in response to emailed questions.



SoftBank wasn't immediately available for comment during a Japanese national holiday. Ant had no comment.

Beyonce is flawless in body-hugging red sequinned maxi dress and beguiling ombre curls in new Instagram snaps

She is regularly referred to as the queen of all things, and when she shares new images on social media, the world is watching.

Beyonce Knowles-Carter posted a new row of beautiful Instagram photos on Friday, some with her husband Jay-Z and some on her own, in a stunningly sexy glittering red maxi dress.

The *Lion King* star, 38, wore her hair up in a beautiful high ponytail, which cascaded down around her face and shoulders in playfully bouncy curls that gradually turned lighter and lighter.

The mother of three's sensational curves were on full display in the skintight gown, which featured a turtleneck and long sleeves.

In the pair of wide photos in which she's seen posing with her husband in a suit and white tee, Beyonce's hips are especially prominent.

To ensure that she's not taking herself too seriously, one of those photos shows the Halo songstress making a funny face, and in both she's seen making kissy lips.

For the killer look, Beyonce accessorized with feather-like bronze earrings, sparkling red sunglasses that matched her frock perfectly, and sheer glittering pumps that looked fit for Cinderella. The XO hitmaker let her natural beauty shine in the suite of photos, wearing pared down makeup and a nude lip.

The snaps, which each racked up close to a million likes or more within one hour of being posted, were appreciated by fans famous and not, with the likes of *Real Housewife* Lisa Rinna and others giving their stamp of approval.

Beyonce has 133 million followers on her Instagram account, yet herself does not follow a single one.

Last week, the *Lemonade* diva shared images a different but equally sultry look, in a lingerie-inspired cut-out jacket and mini skirt set.

She flashed her cleavage as she posed braless in the very low-cut outfit which featured a matching patterned. For that look, Beyonce strutted in black heels with an ankle strap and diamante tassels adorning the backs.



Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt to leave for Manali shoot of Brahmastra in November

Actors Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt reportedly plan to leave for Manali to work on their first film together, *Brahmastra*. Directed by Ayan Mukerji, *Brahmastra* is the first in his fantasy trilogy. The film also stars Amitabh Bachchan, Nagarjuna and Mouni Roy in important roles. A *Mumbai Mirror* report quoted a source as saying, "Ranbir, Alia and the entire cast will fly to Manali in November for a 15-day shoot. Every

location carries Shiva's (RK's character) story forward. Manali, too, plays an important role in the screenplay."

Also read: Karwa Chauth 2019: Amitabh Bachchan crops himself from pic to wish Jaya Bachchan, Anil Kapoor posts candid video

"All the locations in India that feature in the story reference the central characters. During the Manali schedule, the story of Shiva's origin

and self-discovery will be traced," the source added.

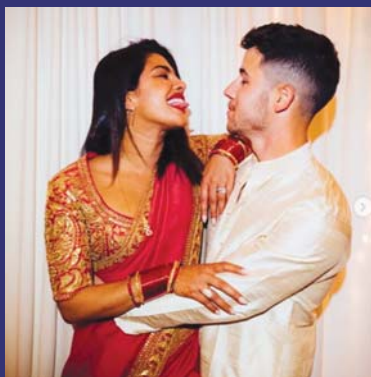
Brahmastra was earlier set to hit theatres on Christmas 2019, but incomplete VFX work and other post-production details forced the makers to announce a delay. The film's logo was unveiled at a grand event during the Mahakumbh Mela earlier this year in Varanasi. The film is now expected to release in 2020.

Priyanka Chopra, Nick Jonas share Karwa Chauth pics

Actor Priyanka Chopra had a memorable first Karwa Chauth with her singer husband Nick Jonas, one she'll 'always remember'. She shared pictures on Instagram, mentioning how she celebrated the festival at a Jonas Brothers concert.

"Karwa chauth at a @jonasbrothers concert. Definitely a first I'll always remember! @nickjonas #karwachauth," she captioned the picture.

In it, she is tugging onto Nick's arm as they sit on a couch together. She is wearing a bright red saree with a golden border, red bangles, a bindi and vermilion on her forehead. Nick also shared pictures from the celebrations. "My wife is Indian. She is Hindu, and she is incredible in every way. She has



taught me so much about her culture and religion. I love and admire her so much, and as you can see we have fun together. Happy Karwa Chauth to everyone," he wrote with the pics. Priyanka also shared pictures with her friends as they celebrated together. "Me and my friends #karwachauth2019," she captioned their selfie which also featured actor and singer VJ Anusha.

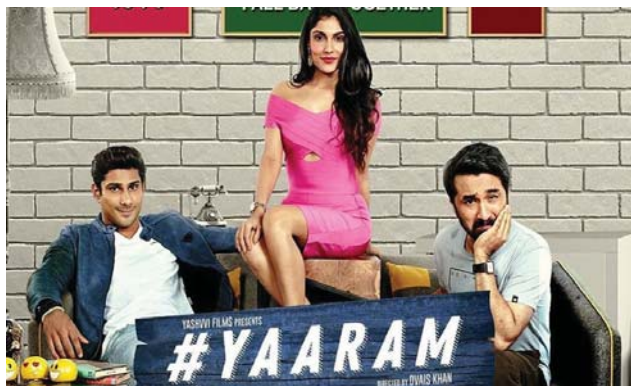
While Priyanka is in the foreground, her friends got blurred in the background. The actor also posted multiple pictures on her Instagram stories, showing off her mehendi and her red bangles. 'Karwa Chauth prep,' she captioned the photos. Priyanka and Nick tied the knot in December last year in Jodhpur.



Yaaram movie review

A serious subject badly trivialised, courtesy poor writing

Yaaram is based on the practice of Nikah Halala and aims to applaud the Centre for banning Triple Talaq. However, it ends up trivialising the sensitive subject.



Yaaram
Director - Ovais Khan
Cast - Prateik Babbar, Siddhanth Kapoor, Ishita Raj Sharma
Bollywood films being made on government schemes, initiatives, and landmark judgments by courts are no longer a trend that make you stand up and take notice. There have been plenty of those and have been effective in various degrees.

However, in director Ovais Khan's Yaaram, we have

the film picking a sensitive subject and then trivializing it. Starring actors Prateik Babbar, Ishita Raj Sharma and Siddhanth Kapoor in lead roles, Yaaram is a rather juvenile take on patriarchal practices of Triple Talaq and Nikah Halala. The film aims to applaud the Centre for banning Triple Talaq, but fails terribly. While the message is eventually conveyed, it is the case of too little, too late. Even then, the lesson comes as a

'janhit mein jaari soochna' via Shakti Kapoor as he channels '80s Jeetendra in a white suit.

The film is set in very urbane Mauritius where Rohit (Prateik Babbar), who played cupid to his best friends — Sahil (Siddhanth Kapoor) and Zoya (Ishita Raj Sharma) — four years ago in college, is meeting them after six months. He finds that the two are now separated as Sahil said 'talaq talaq talaq' in a moment of anger.

Sahil regrets his action and wants Zoya back in his life. He wants Rohit to marry Zoya and then divorce her so that he can remarry her — the practice called Nikah Halala. Rohit, meanwhile, is about to marry a girl of his parents' choice. Whether this plan works forms the crux of the film. Yaaram's central idea is lost in

translation because of poor screenplay and writing. Vague flashbacks and irrelevant events don't help the narrative in any way. Editing is another major loophole, and at many places you would notice cuts and jumps that are hard to explain. While the director chose to make a serious film, the attention on comic punches and emotions is missing. Even the actors are sleepwalking through the parts, fed as they are with clichéd dialogues and done-to-death tropes. A woman tells prospective groom during a meeting for arranged marriage: 'Itne good looking ho, successful ho, handsome ho, gay bhi nahi ho, koi ladki to pasand aayi hogi'. Even Prateik and Siddhanth's friendship is stereotypical, with the

former claiming, "Meri madad ke bina koi ter maara hai tune?" While the actors have proved their talent earlier, even the best of talent can't make a bad film look good. Having watched Ishita Raj Sharma play the free spirited and chirpy girl in Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA part 1 and 2 and more recently in Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety, you find her underwhelming in Yaaram. She keeps up with her glam image but the half-baked character arc lets her down. Prateik Babbar is his charming and suave self on screen. The man totally believes in 'if you have it, flaunt it' and that's why he doesn't hesitate for one bit while taking off his shirt in multiple scenes. With the kind of confidence he exudes, it won't be wrong to say that his talent remains untapped in the

industry, barring projects such as Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na or Mulk. Siddhanth Kapoor, son of Shakti Kapoor, lacks the screen presence of his father. It is hard to care for his performance. The one thing that works in the favour of this film is its length. As soon as the makers felt that they've said what they wanted to, they wrapped it up. Sadly, the climax which could have been dramatic with a little bit of shock value comes across as shoddy. Music, however, is somewhat a saving grace and romantic tracks, Yaaram and Kash Fir Se, are enjoyable. But throwing in an item song starring Natasa Stankovic during opening credits could have been avoided. Yaaram is best avoided unless you are looking for comic relief. Even then, it is no value for money.

Fractured movie review

A harrowing Hitchcockian thriller for you to discover on Netflix

Avatar actor Sam Worthington stars in a moderately gripping Netflix thriller, inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's The Lady Vanishes.



Fractured
Director - Brad Anderson
Cast - Sam Worthington, Lily Rabe, Stephen Tobolowsky
Brad Anderson can direct films like Fractured — his latest, out on Netflix — in his sleep. So as a fan of his work, it came as a bit of a letdown that the filmmaker appeared to have done just that.

Armed with exactly the sort of Hitchcockian premise that you'd expect from one of his films, Fractured wastes a

deviously inviting set-up in favour of a rather by-the-numbers conclusion. You will see the plot twists from a mile away, calling more attention to themselves than the golden arches of a McDonald's on an abandoned highway. Sam Worthington plays Ray Monroe, driving cross-country with his wife and young daughter to celebrate Thanksgiving with his parents. At a rest stop along the way, little Peri Monroe has a fall

and breaks her arm. Ray and his wife rush her to a hospital they passed a few miles back, and immediately, things take a turn for the strange.

Ray is asked odd personal questions by the orderlies, his insurance is turned down and he notices suspicious-looking packages being smuggled from back doors. After being sent round and round in circles for a few hours, a doctor (played by the always morally ambiguous Stephen Tobolowsky) arrives to check up on Peri. Yes, she seems to have fractured her arm, the doctor agrees, but perhaps they also ought to get her head checked for internal injuries to be safe. He advises Ray to get a CT scan done, and Peri is quickly taken to the basement with her

mother, while Ray returns to the waiting room. Several hours later, a worried Ray asks the receptionist to check up on his wife and daughter, but they seem to have no record of either of them. Dr Berthram, who attended to Peri earlier, has left for the day. And none of the orderlies remember Ray arriving with anyone but himself. With increasing dread, Ray realises that his family has disappeared. As someone who considers The Lady Vanishes to be Alfred Hitchcock's most entertaining movie, a modern-day 'adaptation' directed by Brad Anderson is right up my alley. And for roughly an hour, Fractured is quite gripping; fast-paced, clever, and suitably intriguing thanks to

a t m o s p h e r i c cinematography and an eerie piano score. The hospital itself provides an effectively sinister setting, where you're never quite sure whom to believe, and the plot rarely, if ever, takes silly detours.

But then the film collapses upon itself towards the third act, when the action escapes from the confines of the facility, and thereby releases the tension that Anderson had so meticulously built. That being said, Fractured is still a better film than Jodie Foster's Flightplan, which essentially did little else but to uproot The Lady Vanishes' plot from a train and plonk it inside a plane. There's some interesting subtext about the rigmarole of the healthcare system, which

will be relatable not only for Americans, but also to Indians accustomed to queuing up for basic stuff. And Anderson is, as he has proven in the past with films such as The Machinist, Session 9, and Transsiberian, skilled at making nifty little thrillers.

Sam Worthington's performance as Ray might not be on par with what Christian Bale did in The Machinist, or with Halle Berry's work in The Call — the two best performances that Anderson has extracted from his actors — but it has that stoic leading man energy that so many noticed about a decade ago. Fractured is in no way breaking the mould, but for its audience, it can be a good enough reason to plaster yourself to your couch on a quiet evening.



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*Man deported three years ago allegedly
reentered the US and now stands
accused of killing his girlfriend*



(News Agencies) A man who was deported to the Dominican Republic in 2016 after several criminal convictions was arrested this week and charged with fatally stabbing his girlfriend in New York this summer, according to court documents and officials. Luis Severino Colon, 49, was charged and arraigned Tuesday on state charges of second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter of Cindi Olivo, 32, Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said in a press release. Prosecutors in the Southern District of New York federally charged Severino Colon with illegal reentry, which is a felony.

(Contd on page 23)

PMC Bank Fraud: Internal investigation finds over Rs 10 crore missing from records

The bank's internal team has found "multiple cheques" issued by HDIL and its related entities, but there are no records of these cheques in the bank's entry book.

(News Agencies) In another development in the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank scam, the bank's internal team has found that a total of Rs 10.5 crore cash is missing from the bank's records. The bank's internal team has found "multiple cheques" issued by Housing Development and Infrastructure Limited (HDIL) and its related entities, reported The Times of India. While these cheques were never deposited with the bank, the cash was nevertheless handed over to HDIL parties. The discovered cheques amount to over Rs 10 crore but the team found that there was no account for another missing amount of



Rs 50-55 lakh. It is worth noting that this is apart from the Rs 4,355 crore loan fraud amount that bank's officials had quoted earlier. However, the total fraud amounts to over Rs 6,500 crore, contrary to the amount quoted by the corrupt officials who were involved in the scam. The report added that the bank's internal investigation team

found out about the missing Rs 10.5 crore only after looking carefully into the bank's financial transactions. It has also come to light that HDIL and group companies sent cheques for a couple of years to the bank's former managing director Joy Thomas. Thomas did grant HDIL parties cash but did not deposit these cheques with

the bank. No entry of cheques reflected in the bank's record book. Thomas, who had earlier admitted about the scam, has now been sent to judicial custody till October 22. Thomas, however, was not alone and the loans to HDIL were approved along with other members on the loan committee of the PMC Bank. With the fresh development, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police may additionally book Thomas and other involved people for misappropriation of funds. Meanwhile, the bank has also arrested former director of PMC Bank Surjit Arora and was produced in court where he was remanded in police custody till October 22.

Nationwide Vaping Illnesses Near 1,500, With Death Toll Hitting 33



The latest weekly CDC figures show that vaping-related illnesses are still rising across the country, but at a slightly slower pace.

(News Agencies) There have been 180 new illnesses and seven new deaths related to vaping over the last week, U.S. health officials said on Thursday, suggesting that such cases are still rising — at a slightly slower pace across the country. A

total of 1,479 lung injury cases and 33 deaths have taken place in the U.S. since March, when an outbreak appears to have started, according to the latest numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Last week's numbers constitute the lowest weekly rise in lung injury cases since mid-

September, The Associated Press reported. One week prior, there were 275 new illnesses, marking a 52% rise. All states except for Alaska have reported vaping-related illnesses. The District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands also have cases, the CDC said. The majority of people who have gotten sick used a vaping product that

contained THC, the main psychoactive compound found in marijuana. The cause of these illnesses is not well understood, though exposure to a chemical or chemicals is suspected. "To date, national and state data suggest that products containing THC, particularly those obtained off the street or from other informal

sources (e.g., friends, family members, or illicit dealers), are linked to most of the cases and play a major role in the outbreak," the CDC has said. Until more is known, health officials are urging the public to refrain from using any type of e-cigarette or vaping product, deeming them unsafe for people of all ages.

